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QUIT INDIA CALL AND THE ROLE OF COMMUNISTS

(A Reply to Arun Shourie)

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M. Basavapunnaiah

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(A REPLY TO ARUN SHOURIE)

M. BASAVAPUNNAIAH

NATIONAL BOOK CENTRE

C-5540

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First Published in 1984
by Rajendra Prasad for
NATIONAL BOOK CENTRE,
14, Ashoka Road, New Delhi-110001.

Printed at Progressive Printers,
C-52-53, DDA Sheds,
Okhla Industrial Estate, Phase-I,
New Delhi-110020.

FOREWORD

The Illustrated Weekly of India has published four articles by Mr. Arun Shourie, slandering the Communists. Shourie claimed that they colluded with British imperialism in 1942, that they acted as agents of Moscow, and were dishonest in demanding the release of the Congress leaders and the formation of a Congress-League coalition Government because they were engaged in a clandestine correspondence with Mr. Maxwell, the then Home Secretary of the British Indian Government. The editor of *The Illustrated Weekly* displayed these articles with 'colourful' headlines. Arun Shourie's articles ran into some fifty thousand words which were neither 'research' nor 'investigative journalism' but could only be described as obvious propaganda against the cause of communism.

As the editor of our Party Organ, *People's Democracy*, I had announced in our paper dated April 1, 1984 that a reply would be framed after all the instalments of Shourie's article were published. Our Polit Bureau had discussed the matter and decided the lines on which we should reply. It entrusted me with the task of writing the reply and publishing it in our Party press.

Interestingly, the editor of the *Illustrated Weekly* volunteered to publish our reply in the columns of his weekly. We accepted the offer and sent him three articles with the assurance that the concluding piece would soon be forwarded. However, the honourable editor of the *Weekly* suddenly changed his mind stating that he would publish only the first article so that our reply appeared in his paper in a totally distorted fashion.

Our Polit Bureau severely protested against this misdemeanour and our Party General Secretary conveyed our protest to the editor of *The Illustrated Weekly*. We have decided to place

the entire issue before the Press Council, exposing the unethical and immoral standards being followed by some big press establishments such as *The Illustrated Weekly of India.*

The purpose of Shourie's articles was to defame the Communists by calling them agents of Russia, of the British, and even of Jinnah. In our reply we resolutely refute this slander against the Indian working class and its Communist vanguard, and expose Shourie's attempt to conceal the reformist, conciliatory postures of the bourgeois-landlord leaders of the Congress and Muslim League who failed the forces of anti-imperialism and Indian Nationalism, accepting the communal partition of the country in 1947 inspired and imposed by the British. This bourgeois-landlord leadership stood opposed to all militant, mass anti-imperialist and anti-feudal struggles.

The post-independence history of our country confirms our charge. It is utter political bankruptcy on the part of the vested interests to slander the Communists. The daily experience and struggles of the people deprive the ruling classes of the capacity to defend their decaying social order.

While bringing these articles together in the form of a booklet, I have added to them one more article at the end, 'Indian Independence and its Birhpangs'. The article has a direct bearing on the subject I have dealt with in my polemic with Arun Shourie.

Besides, I owe a word or two to our readers. I could not do full justice to the subject since several other pre-occupations of our Party's routine work prevented my pursuing the subject single mindedly at a stretch. Consequently, I had to hand over voluminous manuscripts to Comrade Rajan of *People's Democracy* to streamline the articles. He and his wife Madhu have done their utmost to improve the style and idiom. I must thank them for their assistance.

M. Basavapunnaiah

Arun Shourie gained prominence as a journalist with a selectively 'investigative' approach. Typically the more well known of his reports, limited in scope, sensational in character, include a couple of dramatic exposures. When after a recent period of seeming inactivity, Shourie figured with much fanfare in *The Illustrated Weekly*, as a 'researcher' into the history of the Indian Communist movement, one was amazed to see that only the nomenclature had been altered. Shourie's 'researches' in the National Archives need not be taken as writings beyond the level of a journalistic 'scoop'. It is by the standards that justify 'scoops' that we first measure Shourie's writings, and find him politically exposed in the bargain.

Forty two years divide us from the year 1942 when the alleged Communist betrayal of the national movement was supposed to have taken place. The papers pertaining to this period in the National Archives were opened to the public over a decade ago. We must raise the question : what exactly inspired this "historical" research and what prompted him to time his "exposure" articles at this juncture of Indian politics?

MOTIVES OF 'EXPOSURE'

The view that India has no other political party capable of ruling the country except the Congress party of Smt. Gandhi, is widely propagated and fostered. However, the existence of five to six non Congress State Governments, prominent among which are the Left-oriented Governments in West Bengal and Tripura (in office for more than seven years) and earlier in Kerala, is a reality that cannot be ignored. The Left parties and Left-Front Governments, with the CPI (M) and the CPI as the basic constituents, together with other democratic and secular parties, are presenting alternative policies to those followed by the Congress (I).

The prospect of a Left and democratic alternative emerging at the national level is not to the liking of hide-bound bourgeois thinkers. A systematic slander campaign against Communists at such crucial periods becomes a handy weapon. The "digging up" of the 1942 events in 1984, has direct bearing on the issue. Nor is it the first time that these events have been so utilized. Any 'researcher' better informed than Mr. Shourie, of the history of the last 42 year would have been wary of using the 'originality' of his 'exposure' as a cover for his propagandist aims.

The specific irritant for Shourie and his like is the increasing political ideological prestige of the Indian Left, and the CPI (M) in particular, while the much-boosted BJP and Lok Dal National Democratic Alliance is not making any headway at a time when the stock of the ruling Congress is at its lowest. It is the desperate attempt of certain interested circles to propagate the idea among the mass of the Indian people that the only option before them is to remain subject to the misrule of the Congress (I) while waiting fatalistically for the day when the BJP led alliance comes of age and sets sail on the sea!

Yet another reason for launching an anti-Communist tirade is the popularity of Marxist theory and ideas in circles far beyond the direct organisational hold of the Communists. This was more than evident in the just concluded centenary year of the death of Karl Marx, when along with the CPI (M) and CPI, a large number of academics and other sections of the intellegentsia, of workers, youth and students participated in the observance of the centenary. It is a measure of the popularity of Marx's ideas, of the respect commanded by his ideas and the movements guided by them, that the Indian Parliament adopted a resolution on Marx and his teachings on this occasion.

IGNORANCE ABOUNDING

Coming now to the 'theme' of these articles, the alleged 'betrayal' of 1942, it is apparent that Shourie is not concerned

with any real research on modern Indian history. The history of the Indian National Movement as one of the biggest anti-imperialist movements, the role of different classes, parties and personalities in it, is not a subject which Shourie appears capable of understanding. Shourie's effort is clearly to pass on rough and ready cheap anti Communism to the public. For his articles betray a colossal ignorance of the complexities of the National Movement and the historical conditions in which it occured.

'Investigative journalist' that he is, he thinks that an understanding of any social phenomenon can be attained by looking at convenient documents with a fresh-faced ignorance of their socio-historical context, claiming at the same time an authority on all kinds of matters on which he is clearly uninformed. So we have a new 'expert' on modern world history, and not merely on the history of our freedom struggle.

It is unfortunate for Shourie that his series of articles should open with a stupid diatribe against the USSR and its Non-Aggression Pact with Nazi Germany, which thoroughly exposes his claim even to bare competence, let alone expertise on the subject He paints it as the original sin which led to the Second World War and was thus the cause of all the "evils" that continue to haunt us today. He thinks he is being clever in cunningly exploiting the assiduously cultivated prejudice against Stalin to denounce the foreign policy of the first Socialist State. He, of course is unaware that this foreign policy was guided by norms of proletarian internationalism and defence of world revolution, consistently followed by both Lenin and Stalin.

PHASES OF HISTORY

Surely a writer who embarks on "research" of this period is expected to be aware of the distinct phases of political history since 1917 at least. He should, at least acquaint himself with what actually happened in the world political arena during the years 1917 and 1922 following the close of the First World War. He should know the developments of the second period from 1922-23 to August 23, 1939, when the Non-Aggression Pact

was signed between the USSR and Hitler's Germany, and the third period covering the time from the open declaration of war on September 3, 1939, to June 22, 1941, during which the conquest of the entire Western and Eastern parts of Europe by Fascist Germany and Italy was complete. The final phase included the period from June 22, 1941 to May 1945 when Nazism, Fascism and Japanese militarism were smashed, Europe was liberated and scores of newly independent countries in the world emerged.

Arun Shourie, boastful of his status as researcher, is totally ignorant of these distinct phases of modern social history, or else, is fighting shy of facing the facts and placing them objectively before his readers. Any student of modern history who closes his eyes to the development of world capitalism and imperialism, the two great world wars of 1914-18 and 1939-45 which shook the world social order to its roots and, the period in which world Socialism, first in the form of the October Socialst Revolution in Russia and subsequently as a world system embracing one-third of humanity arose, cannot make head or tail of any socio-political phenomenon of the modern era.

It is this abysmal ignorance and a deliberate shutting one's eyes to this objective reality that leads men like Shourie to misadventure of the kind currently being examined.

IMPACT OF OCTOBER REVOLUTION

Mr. Arun Shourie, unfortunately, will have to do some painstaking study to understand why the First World War broke out, how it was brought to an end and with what consequences, and the decisive role played by the Russian Socialist Revolution and the new Soviet State to end imperialist war. It may be worthwhile to attempt to educate Shourie by informing him that the very first decree of the Soviet State was the decree of peace. The October Socialist Revolution, at one stroke, demolished the Czarist empire and liberated scores of nations and minority nationalities which had been groaning under the Czarist dictatorship for centuries.

The success of the struggle weakened the grip of imperialism and was the source of inspiration and support to the national

liberation movements. Nor has the Socialist world lost this stature in the decades since 1917. Openly and viciously attacked by world imperialism for raising high the banner of peace, national independence and Socialism, the strengthening and defence of the first Socialist Republic was not, as Mr. Shourie's 'history' would have us believe, the origin of war and betrayal of the fledgling national liberation movements. It was imperialism, facing a serious economic crisis in the late '20s and early, 30s, that had begun war preparations for a redivision of the world.

SOVIET WARNING

The General Secretary's report to the Seventeenth Congress of the CPSU, as early as January, 1934, clearly stated that preparations for a new world war had already begun. To quote :

> Japan's war against China, the occupation of Manchuria, Japan's wtihdrawal from the League of Nations, and her advance in North China have made the situation still more tense. The intensified struggle for the Pacific and the growth of naval armaments in Japan, the United States, Great Britain and France are the results of this increased tension.
>
> Germany's withdrawal from the League of Nations and the spectre of revanchism have further added to the tension and have given a fresh impetus to the growth of armaments in Europe.
>
> Again as in 1914, the parties of bellicose imperialism, the parties of war and revanchism are coming into the foreground.
>
> Quite clearly things are heading for a new war.

Again on March 10, 1939 the General Secretary's Report to the Eighteenth Congress of the CPSU, had clearly stated:

> A new imperialist war is already in its second year, a war waged over a huge territory stretching from Shanghai to Gibraltar, and involving over 500 million people. The map of Europe, Africa and Asia is being forcibly redrawn. The entire post-war system, the so-called peace regime, has been shaken to its foundations.

APPEASING FASCISM

The Japanese occupation of Manchuria in March 1932, the instigation of civil war in Spain by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy's arming of the reactionary forces of General Franco against the Republican Spanish Government, the invasions of Ethiopia by Fascist Italy in the year 1935 and the feverish war prepartions by the German, Italy-Japan fascist axis, faciliated by the appeasement policy of the British, American and French imperialists, are facts of which the newly appointed "historical" researcher, Mr. Arun Shourie is totally oblivious.

Shourie does not know that as early September 29, 1938, a full year before the Non-Aggression Pact, the heads of Government of Britain, France, Germany and Italy met in Munich and decided to dismember Czechoslovakia, turning over a part of Czech territory to Hitler's Germany.

Typically he is also ignorant of the fact that the Anglo-French - U.S. imperialist bloc was egging on the axis powers to direct their attack on the Soviet Union.

Let Shourie read his history text-books to note the fact that as early as in 1933 the USSR had proposed a multilateral Security Pact to ensure collective security, checkmating the war moves of revanchist Germany and fascist Italy, an offer which was talked out and sabotaged by the Allied Powers.

Why did the world imperialist gangsters reject all Soviet proposals for disarmament and peace before the Second World War? According to the Congressional Record of the U.S. Government the logic was as follows.

The idea of rejection of the Soviet offer was formulated in no uncertain terms by Senator Harry Truman who later became Vice President, and then President of the United States. In his statement to the Press a day after the Nazi attack on the Soviet Union, he said :

> If we see that Germany is winning, we ought to help Russia and if Russia is winning, we ought to help Germany, and that way let them kill as many as possible.

His fellow Senator, Robert Taft, was more outspoken, 'Hitler's victory would be preferable to the United States'.

Such were the cold-blooded schemes of the world capitalist powers to destroy Socialist Russia. The Non-Aggression Pact between Hitlerite Germany and the USSR was one historical act in a long sequence of initiatives to protect both the Soviet Union and capitalist democracies from fascism. Only later when the attitude of the imperialists became clear, did the Soviet Union enter into the Non-Aggression Pact, to escape the consequences of the imperialist designs of encirclement.

As against this, for Shourie historical events are patterned on dinner party conversations. The origin of the great evil, as he puts it, begins with the signing of the Non-Aggression Pact between Fascist Germany and Socialist Russia. In his own words :

> On August 23, 1939, amidst much toasting and bonhomie the Soviet Union entered into a Pact with Hitler. It was styled as a Non-Aggression Pact. His Eastern Front secure, within a week of the Pact on September 1, 1939 Hitler invaded Poland. On September 3, Britain and France declared war against Germany.
>
> Thus for Shourie began the Second World War!

What sort of historical researcher is this who, ignoring the German occupation of Austria and of Czechosolvakia, can assert that the Non Aggression Pact was the cause of Hitler's attack on Europe? Herr Shourie, in company with Truman, Taft, the editor of *The Times* and Cunard & Company, would have preferred a pact between Chamberlain-Daladier and company and the German, Japanese and Italian fascist axis, a pact that would have led to the destruction of Socialism and the aspirations of the nationalist movement.

NEHRU'S ASSESSMENT

Arun Shourie, in his research has not even taken note of the observations of Jawaharlal Nehru on the attitude of the imperialists towards Soviet Russia and the Axis Powers. These observations are reflective of the perception of a significant

section of the leadership of the National Movement. Shourie ignores them only because they thoroughly expose his own biased projection of events.

Nehru observed :

The whole policy of the British Government since the War began has gone to show that they are deliberately and consistently following an imperialist line. Before the War, the Chamberlain Government was well known to be utterly reactionary and on many occasions they encouraged the Fascist and Nazi powers and crushed democracy in Europe. This was evident in the case of Abyssinia, Spain, Austria, Czechoslovakia and Albania. Their policy in Manchuria was also of the same kind. Mr. Chamberlain's Government was known to be the most reactionary and imperialist Government that England has had for more than a hundred years.

This old policy was one of encouraging all the reactionary elements in Europe and the Far East and even in America, and trying to weaken Russia which stood as a challenge to all reactionary elements as well as to imperialism. While on the one hand fear of the growing Nazi power made them some-times look to Russia for help, their dislike of Russia and of the growth of democracy was so great that they could not cooperate in any way with Russia. So till the last moment they followed the policy of appeasement towards Hitler and Mussolini and thereby strengthened them greatly. Their object was to get Hitler entangled in a war against Soviet Russia and thus weaken their two chief enemies. On no account did they want Germany or Italy to have progressive regimes :

Proceeding further Nehru stated :

Therefore it is very important that we should be clear in our minds about the present British policy towards Russia and that we should declare that we are against it and in no event can we support or approve of British action against Russia.

(Letter to Abdul Kalam Azad, February 22, 1940).

Again Nehru in his letter to Mahatma Gandhi, dated January 24, 1940 about British imperialist policy in all manner of nefarious undertakings, maintained :

> I feel, therefore, that we must be very cautious and wary and should make it perfectly clear that we are not going to support these imperialist objectives of the war.
> As I have mentioned above, the position is likely to grow much more complicated soon if the Western Powers mobilise against Russia and their intrigue with Italy succeeds. They will call it a holy war against communism and under cover of that not only try to strengthen their own Empire but break up the Socialist State of Soviet Russia. That would be a calamity quite apart from our agreement with Russian policy or not. I would beg of you to bear this in mind and to view Indian talks in this perspective.

Nehru in a despatch captioned **India and Russia**, dated February 22, 1942, had the following to say :

> Our problems in India today are the same as those that faced Russia some years ago; and they can be solved in the same manner in which the Russians solved theirs. We should draw a lesson from the USSR in the way of industrialising and educating our country.

Russia, though very much different from India, had the same problems to face but they were able to make remarkable progress after the famous revolution, only because they were free to decide their own fate. It was the result of that foundation that Russia, and only Russia out of so many countries of Europe invaded by Germany in the Second World War, was not only able to face the invaders but checked them and threw their attack back. This was so because their economic structure had a very strong foundation which could withstand such an onslaught.

Similarly, China had withstood the onslaught for five years while several other nations had gone out of existence within the first two and a half years. Nehru regretted that India was not given the scope to develop to its full stature. He said that they

were in the midst of a revolution, a great revolution which would affect not one or two countries but all the countries of the world including India, and the Chinese and Russian cultures and civilisations were bound to influence the Indian economic structure. It was not merely a soldiers' war, it was a fight between certain forces, and assuming for a moment there was a temporary victory of arms, that would not last, no one could escape the forces, they had to be faced squarely and unitedly.

During the last fifty years not only Nehru, but several leaders of national liberation movements have essentially correctly grasped this reality of the world situation because it is vital to their interests. It is too much to expect Shourie, limited in his analysis to some letters, memos and reports plucked out of their historical context, to be capable of comprehending the historical meaning of the facts of life.

Consequently Shourie's researches constantly lead him to adopt well-worn and discredited interpretations of historical events. He attacks the Socialist Soviet Union on the grounds that it entered into a secret deal with Nazi Germany to partition Poland, and accordingly occupied vast territories of Poland. However this aimed at keeping the Nazi armies as distant as possible from the Russian borders, and was not motivated by the desire to forcibly incorporate Polish territory into the USSR. The Polish bourgeois-landlord classes were more prepared to surrender to Hitler than to join hands with the USSR to fight the growing menace of Nazi Germany in Europe.

It is a well-known fact that only when, by the autumn of 1944 the Red Army had liberated the last inch of Soviet territory, did the Anglo-American allies open the Second Front against Hitler in June 1944. The USSR, liberating the Nazi enslaved peoples of Europe, sacrificed more than a million Soviet soldiers of whom as many as six lakhs died in the liberation of Poland alone. And yet people who claim to be researchers continue the lie that the Soviet leadership planned partition of Poland in collusion with Hitlerite Germany ! Imperialist

conquerers and butchers are given honourable titles of 'Western democracies' while the Socialist Soviet Union is being described as "totalitarian" and "expansionist". On the basis of such facts is the myth propagated that the CPI and other world Communist contingents were "abetting and acquiescing" in the Soviet conquest of nations and countries !

The other well worn charge of expansionist aims relates to the Soviet intervention in Finland. It was Lenin, as the head of the new Soviet State, who signed the declaration of Finnish independence and handed it over to the Finnish delegation. Since that time there were no incidents which could be remotely described as harassing the small Finnish neighbour, till November 30, 1939, when Soviet forces intervened. All efforts of the USSR to persuade the Finnish bourgeois-landlord Government to peacefully settle the issue vital to the defence of Leningrad situated hardly 20 miles away from the Finnish border, had failed.

It was nobody's contention that the bourgeois-landlord Finnish Government could invade the Soviet Union But equally indisputable was the fact that Finland was receiving arms from Nazi Germany and its Government had constructed the so-called "Mannerheim Line", which could only serve as the spring-board for a Nazi attack on Leningrad, the second biggest industrial city of the USSR. The Soviet Red Army had to uproot this infamous ' Mannerheim Line", sign a peace treaty, conceding equivalent territory to Finland, and thus foil the Nazi conspiracy of invasion and occupation of Leningrad.

Any novice of history would realise how Leningrad under Nazi seige suffered grievously for full three years losing lakhs of its citizens, victims of starvation and Nazi bombardment. He would also know that the fall of Leningrad into the hands of the fascists would have made the USSR highly vulnerable to Nazi conquest.

We cite the President of Finland, Mr. Kekkonen, in his speech on September 25, 1964 :

> If we try today, after two decades to put ourselves in the position of the Soviet Union, we can, in the light of Hitler's

attack on the Soviet Union in 1941 understand how great was the anxiety that the Soviet Union felt and was bound to feel about its security at the end of the 1930's. (Speeches of U.K. Kekkonen—1963-67).

But there are "historians" who still dare to dispute the correctness of the Soviet step vis-a-vis the Finnish pro Nazi regime, and continue the discredited song that the Soviet Union "invaded" Finland to annex it into the "Soviet Empire" ! Who can open the eyes of a man who has lost his political eyesight ?

LENIN ON FOREIGN POLICY

There are some, like Mr Shourie, who still think that the Non-Aggression Pact between Nazi Germany and the Socialist Soviet Union can be proved to be an attempt at the appeasement of the Nazis, if it can be shown to be a product of Stalin's "opportunist mischief".

To dispel such ill-informed notions we cite from Lenin, who formulated the basis for the foreign policy of the encircled and embattled USSR.

The entire emphasis lay on utilising inter-imperialist antagonisms to save the lone Russian Socialist State from the attacks of the hostile imperialist powers.

Lenin stipulated that :

From the political point of view, the fundamental thing in the question of concessions—and here there are both political and economic considerations - is a rule we have not only assimilated in theory, but also have applied in practice, a rule which remains fundamental with us for a long time until Socialism finally triumphs all over the world; we must take advantage of the antagonisms and the contradictions that exist between the two imperialisms, the two groups of capitalist States, and play them off against each other. Until we have conquered the whole, and as long as we are economically and militarily weaker than the capitalist world, we must stick to the rule that we must be able to take advantage of antagonisms and contradictions existing among the imperialists. Had we not adhered to this rule, every one of us would have long ago been strung up by the neck to the

glee of the capitalists. We gained our chief experience in this respect when we concluded the Treaty of Brest Litovsk.....

Brest-Litovsk was significant in being the first time that we were able on an immense scale and amidst vast difficulties to take advantage of the contradictions among the imperialists in such a way as to make Socialism the utimate gainer. (*Lenin, Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 438).

At present, we stand between two foes, if we are unable to defeat both of them, we must be able to dispose of our forces in such a way as to make them fall out among themselves; whenever thieves fall out, honest men come into their own. (ibid p. 447).

Lenin's stipulation is not to be construed as a petty opportunistic diplomatic game. He lays its theoretical foundation as follows :

We must take political advantage of the differences among our opponents, but only of major differences that are due to profound economic causes. If we try to exploit minor and fortuitous differences, we shall be behaving like petty politicians and cheap diplomats. There is nothing of value gained by that.

Are there any radical antagonisms in the present day capitalist world that must be utilised? Yes, there are three principal ones, which I should like to enumerate. The first one that affects us closest, is the relation between Japan and America. War is brewing between them. They cannot live together in peace on the shores of the Pacific, although those shores are three thousands verts apart. This rivalry arises incontestably from the relations between their capitalisms...It is beyond doubt that war is brewing, that is inevitable. (ibid. p. 442).

Lenin clearly laid down the tactics :

If we are obliged to put up with such scoundrels as the capitalist robbers, each of whom is ready to knife us, it is our prime duty to make them turn their knives against each

other. Whenever thieves fall out, honest men come into their own.

Lenin argued that since at the root of the antagonism between America and other countries lies the profound economic cause of America being richer, "if the least opportunity arises of aggravating the differences between American and other capitalist countries. it should be grasped with both the hands." (*ibid*, 449)

After a discussion of the causes and the consequences of the three antagonisms of the period, Lenin had declared, "We shall likewise set America against Japan, the entire Entente against America, and all Germany against the Entente". (*ibid*. p. 450)

Delineating the tasks of Socialists in contrast to the bourgeois drive for hegemony Lenin had said :

> A real Socialist would not fail to understand that for the sake of achieving victory over the bourgeoisie, for the sake of power passing to the workers, for the sake of starting the world proletarian revolution, we cannot and must not hesitate to make the heaviest sacrifices. including the sacrifice of part of our territory, the sacrifice of heavy defeats at the hands of imperialism. A real Socialist would have proved by deeds his willingness for "his" country to make the greatest sacrifice to give a real push forward to the cause of the Socialist revolution.
>
> For the sake of "their" cause, that is for the sake of winning world hegemony the imperialists of Britain and Germany have not hesitated to utterly ruin and throttle a whole number of countries, from Belgium and Serbia to Palestine and Mesopotamia. But must Socialists wait with "their" cause, the cause of liberating the working people of the whole world from the yoke of capital of winning universal and lasting peace, until a path without sacrifice is found ? Must they fear to open the battle until an easy victory is guaranteed? Must they place the integrity and security of "their" bourgeoisie created "father land" above the interests of the world Socialist revolution ? The scoundrels in the international

Socialist movement who think this way, those lackeys who grovel to bourgeois morality, thrice stand condemned.

The tactics laid down by Lenin are unambiguous

I shall not hesitate one second to enter into a similar "agreement" with the German imperialist vultures if an attack upon Russia by Anglo-French troops call for it. And I know perfectly well that my tactics will be approved by the class, conscious proletariat of Russia, Germany, France, Britain, America—in short, of the whole civilised world. Such tactics will ease the task of the Socialist revolution, will hasten it, will weaken the international bourgeoisie, will strengthen the position of the working class which is defeating the bourgeoisie.

In their arduous war of freedom, the American people also entered into "agreements" with some oppressors against others for the purpose of weakening the oppressors and strengthening those who were fighting in a revolutionary manner against oppression, for the purpose of serving the interest of the oppressed people. The American people took advantage of the strife between the French, the Spanish and the British, sometimes they even fought side by side with the forces of the French and Spanish oppressors against the British oppressors ; first they defeated the British and then freed themselves (partly by ransom) from the French and the Spanish.

Dispelling the notion of the path of world revolution being easy and smooth Lenin had observed :

A revolutionary would not 'agree' to a proletarian revolution only 'on the condition' that it proceeds easily and smoothly, that there is, from the outset combined action on the part of the proletarians of different countries, that there are guarantees against defeats, that it will not be necessary during the march to victory to sustain the heaviest casualities, to 'bide one's time in a besieged fortress' on to make one's way along extremely narrow, impassable, winding and dangerous mountain tracks. Such a person is no revolutionary, he has not freed himself from the

pedantry of the bourgeois intellectuals; such a person will be found constantly slipping into the camp of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoise like our Right Socialist-Revolutionaries, Mensheviks and even (although more rarely) Left Socialist Revolutionaries.

Stalin entered into the Non-Agression Pact when half a decade of sustained efforts failed to pursuade the British, French and other allied imperialist powers to negotiate an anti-Fascist alliance to exorcise the rising spectre of Nazism and Fascism in the world, in keeping with the norms of the defence of Socialism as laid down by Lenin.

Arun Shourie's rather casual treatment of the subject is thus totally at variance with facts. It completely disregards the assessment made by both Communist and bourgeois leaders of the national movement in India and reveals his own thorough prejudiced attitude to Communism.

The events of 1942 cannot be interpreted significantly outside of the framework of historical developments outlined above. In the absence of an adequate grasp of historical trends and class realities, any event is reduced to personal ties, and historical tendencies are obscured in trivial debates on the psychological motivation of individuals and groups. In the process of such "single research" genuine history, the history of classes, nations and movements is not illumined but obfuscated beyond recognition.

II

In the four articles Shourie has not made even a cursory reference to the phenomena of capitalism, imperialism and fascism. This shows how deeply he has internalised the world view of the bourgeoisie. He is unable to see the camp of socialism in the present day world. And yet he dons the robes of a research scholar of modern Indian history. Unlike many eminent bourgeois scholars, this penpusher of the bourgeoisie is unable to see the role played by the two basic classes, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat in the struggle for Indian liberation from British imperialism.

Marx and Engels, as early as 1848, had stated in the *Communist Manifesto*, that "our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses, however, this distinctive feature : it has simplified the class antagonisms, society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other ; the bourgeoisie and the proletariat." This statement, made 135 years ago, was made in the light of the experience in Europe, the experience of the developing industrial revolution and the emergence of the new industrial working class.

TWO CLASS OUTLOOKS

Class polarisation began to take place in India, however slowly and haltingly, in the last decades of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th century. Industrial and commercial sections of the capitalist class, mainly British but also their Indian counter-part first developed ; then began the national liberation movement, headed by the national reformist bourgeoisie. It developed the Indian National Congress as its main form of mass organisation and poltical platform.

The next to follow it was the working class and its trade unions whose political-ideological representatives asserted

themselves on the political scene as the Communist Party of India, in the early 1920s. It was not that all other classes and social groups had disappeared. Their political aspirations were being represented by this or that party or organisation, from time to time. The central point we would like to emphasise here is that while other classes such as the petty-bourgeoisie, peasantry and other professionals, existed in big numbers and played their own class-roles, their role was not crucial as was the role of these two new emerging classes, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, and their representative political organisations. Given the nature of capitalist development in India, the bourgeoisie had to ally with sections of the landlords, and the Congress came to represent the ideology of this class combine under the leadership of the bourgeoisie. The CPI, on the other hand represented working class ideology.

Unaware of such realities and totally lacking the tools of scientific research, Mr. Shourie cannot go beyond the sensationalism of the journalist that he essentially is Arun Shourie exposes his bankruptcy in historical research, under the ill-conceived scheme of 'exposing' the Indian Communist Movement, decrying it as nothing but a stooge of British imperialism during the Second World War, and as a bunch of people who sold out their soul and conscience for service to the foreign Soviet Socialist Union.

Yes ! There were two class positions sharply clashing against each other, the Indian bourgeoisie and the Indian proletariat, on almost all the basic questions connected with the Indian freedom struggle : whether the national demand should remain within the confines of "dominion status and Home Rule" or the straight demand raised for complete national independence; whether the forms of struggle should be restricted to the so-called Ahimsa, non-violence and passive resistance, or aimed at militant methods ; whether the agrarian masses had to be roused and brought into open, militant, actions, both in British India and Princely India; and whether the issue of Hindu-Muslim unity against the alien British rule could be brought about in the way Congress tried and failed, or whether any other possible solution could be found to resolve the knotty problem

etc., were among the many questions of crucial importance in the national liberation movement.

Two sharply opposed class outlooks, the bourgeois and the proletarian, did exist. We cannot venture to go into all the issues at the present juncture, but must confine our polemics with Mr. Shourie to the period of the Second World War which lasted for nearly full six years from September 1939, when the Nazis began the war in Europe, to September 1945, when fascist Japan signed the military surrender. Let us objectively and truthfully examine the political-tactical conduct of the bourgeois-led Indian National Congress and the Communist-led proletarian class and movements.

But first let us make some necessary and pertinent observations regarding the claims of the Indian bourgeoisie and the proletariat, as to their respective class orientations and political-ideological affiliations.

By the very nature of the Marxist world view and the method that Communists adopt, their analysis of social reality and their strategy and tactics are based on the class reality. They hold that in the advance of the working class lies the advance of the entire society. Bourgeois ideologues and leaders on the other hand, erroneously believe and propagate the interests of the exploiting classes as the interests of the entire society. The two classes engage in an all-round battle and India is no exception to this.

Arun Shourie having imbibed the bourgeois outlook in toto is unable to see this battle of two class outlooks, further confirmed by the developments that have taken place in the last 37 years after independence. The Congress, which led the National Movement in the period of its virtual monopoly of power since 1947 has built 200 monopoly houses, allowed 5 per cent of the landlords to retain the monopoly of 45 per cent of the land, and pushed over 50 per cent of the Indian population below the poverty line. Arun Shourie like his former employers, the World Bank and the IMF, is blind to this reality.

The issue under discussion is not to assess how effectively the Indian bourgeoisie served the class interests of the capitalists and

landlords in opposition to imperialism. Nor are we going to evaluate how creditably the Communists discharged their duties to the working class and the anti-imperialist liberation movements.

However, the Communists have never claimed that they have made no mistakes in applying Marxism-Leninism to the specific Indian conditions. Nor did they ever conceal the inspiration they, like many others, drew from the first victorious Socialist Revolution in Russia in 1917.

The bourgeois leaders, on the other hand, always boastfully claim that their thinking is entirely homespun, that they take inspiration from the Vedas, the Gita and other classical epics, and that they represent the national genius. The fact that they learnt their ABC of politics and ideology from the Western capitalist democracies, that they were all along aping them in every sphere of life and that they, even today, continue to slavishly depend on the so-called democratic virtues of the capitalist West and their decadent culture, is never acknowledged.

And yet the bourgeois writers, and especially their pen coolies, constantly indulge in the dirty slander that Communist ideology is 'foreign', that Communists do not work for the interests of the respective nations in which they are destined to work, that they are agents of Moscow or Peking, and patriotism has deserted them.

The very same bourgeois ideologues on the other hand, assert that the Communists are rabid nationalists. They have copiously written on how Soviet Communists zealously guard their Socialist Soviet Union, how Chinese Communists passionately defend the interests of the People's Republic of China and how Cuban, Vietnamese, Korean Communists shed their blood for the defence of their respective Socialist homelands.

Confirmed anti-Communists like Arun Shourie cannot be made to see the contradictions in their own positions. Having cast their lot on the side of the decaying capitalist system, they will have to meet its historical destiny.

NAIVE EXPLANATION

Mr. Shourie states that "In India the Communist Party was still a fledgling one. It looked to Moscow for guidelines, recei-

ving its instructions via the Communist Party of Great Britain." Does Mr. Arun Shourie believe that the USSR and CPSU were so poor as not to be able to quickly convey the message to the CPI if they had so wanted ? To say that the CPI delayed its decision on its attitude to the anti-fascist war following the invasion of USSR by the Nazi armies, because of the lack of prompt communication facilities between the CPSU and the CPI, is, to put it mildly, naive and stupid. There were no such instructions from the CPSU and Moscow, and the reasons for the change of stand of the CPI on the war lay elsewhere. The delay was due to the inner-party discussion at the level of the Central Committee and Polit Bureau.

Let us examine Arun Shourie's argument a little more closely.

With Mr. Shourie the theme that the CPI was the mouthpiece of Moscow, and that the former had no brains of its own, has become an article of faith on which his entire research is based. He brazen-facedly writes :

> The question of who was doing the thinking for whom is easily answered. When the Comintern in Moscow declared that Social Democrats were the main enemy as they deluded the people by feeding them illusions about democracy, so the principal task was to denounce and expose them mercilessly, our Communists followed its diktat to the dot. When the Comintern decided 'no', the situation had changed and it now calls for an alliance with Social Democrats and the like; our Communists again followed its *diktat* to the dot, befriending the Socialists, the Congress, etc.
>
> There are those crucial six months of confusion between June 22, 1941, when Hitler attacked the Soviet Union and December 1, 1941, when the Communist Party of India announced its change of line.

If this was so, what was the Indian Communist Party waiting for between June 22, 1941 and December 1, 1941 ? Our talented newly appointed research journalist, Shourie has found the answer :

The Communist Party at last saw the light when on November 6, 1941, Stalin, commemorating the 24th Anniversary of the Soviet Revolution, put out the revelation that Great Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union have united in a single camp.

PEOPLE'S WAR

It is unfortunate that we are called upon to join issue with a political diletante who is ignorant of the fact that Stalin made a radio address on July 3, 1941, ten days after the Nazi invasion of the USSR. Stalin did not wait for five months until the 6th November Speech of 1941, to tell the nature of the anti-fascist war and its possible consequences.

Addressing Soviet citizens, the Red Army and Navy, on Moscow Radio on July 3, 1941, Stalin announced that,

> The war with fascist Germany cannot be considered an ordinary war between two armies; it is also a great *war of the entire Soviet people* against a German fascist army. *The aim of this people's patriotic war against the fascist oppressor* is not only to avert the danger that is hanging over our country but also to aid *all the European peoples who are groaning under the yoke of German fascism.* In this war of liberation we shall not be alone. In this war we shall have true allies in the peoples of Europe and America, including the German people who are enslaved by Hitlerite misrulers. Our war for the freedom of our motherland will merge with the struggle of the peoples of Europe and America for their independence, for democratic liberties." (Emphasis added).

Any person with an elementary knowledge of politics could understand the meaning of Stalin's appeal. To say, as Mr. Shourie says that delay in the transmission of messages from the CPSU to the CPI was the cause of delay in the change of line is a canard. The delay in deciding the line of tactical approach to the radically changed conditions of the war was due to the inner discussion in the Central Committee and Polit Bureau, to decide on the tactical line suited to the new realities. Talk of an alleged communication gap or any lack of will to mobilise in full behind the global anti-fascist war is blatently dishonest.

Such is the rubbish, to put it mildly, that comes out of Shourie's revealing research. Arun Shourie and his ilk are utterly incapable of understanding the processes that led the CPI to support the anti-fascist war, its opposition to those who stood against Indian participation in such an anti-fascist war. Mr. Shourie, who propagates the falsehood that Moscow did the thinking for the CPI, should tell us as to who does the thinking for him. Abuse of one's political opponents neither is original, nor does it provide the argument to prove that, whereas Communists are agents of Moscow or a foreign power, all anti-Communists like Shourie are born patriots, genuine nationalists and gifted original thinkers.

Mr. Shourie is not making a discovery in asserting that the Communist International existed and that the CPI was affiliated to it till it was dissolved in the year 1943. To all but researchers of Mr. Shourie's calibre, the enormous stature of the leadership of the first Socialist State is totally comprehensible as consequent on the epochal nature of their achievement. The establishment of the Communist International and the role of the CPSU in it not only reflected the confidence they inspired in all Communist and Workers' Parties the world over, but also emphasised the global character of class struggle and the major responsibility devolving of the first workers' State in advancing this struggle.

To dismiss this by accusing all Communist Parties iucluding the CPI, of being 'Moscow agents' is petty propaganda frequently encountered in 'yellow' journalism but, until Mr. Shourie's inflated claim of 'historical research' certainly not associated with historical analyses of standard.

TWO PHASES OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

To try to tell Mr. Shourie that there were two definite phases of the Second World War, the first lasting for approximately 18 months and the second for nearly four and a half years, would be to treat him like a student of middle school. For people like Shourie, it is easy to assert that war is war, no matter which socio-economic forces range on either side of the barricades. But the leaders of the Indian National

Congress, whose cause he has tried to expound in his 'research' articles, do not seem to agree with Mr. Shourie on this score.

Authoritative decuments of the All India Congress Committee's resolutions on the war shatter the falsified picture of 'history' of Arun Shourie :

> The Congress has repeatedly declared its entire disapprova of the ideology and practice of Fascism and Nazism and their glorification of war and violence and the suppression of the human spirit. It has condemned the aggression in which they had repeatedly indulged and their sweeping away of established principles and recognised standards of civilised behaviour. It has seen in Fascism and Nazism the intensification of the principle of imperialism against which the Indian people have struggled. The Working Committee must therefore unhesitatingly condemn the latest aggression of the Nazi Government in Germany against Poland and sympathise with those who resist it.

Further the resolution observed that,

> the present European war itself signifies the abject failure of the Treaty of Versailles and of its makers, who broke their pledged word and imposed an imperialist peace on the defeated nations. The one hopeful outcome of that Treaty the League of Nations, was muzzled and strangled at the outset and later killed by its parent States.
>
> Subsequent history has demonstrated afresh how even a seemingly fervent declaration of faith may be followed by a ignoble desertion. In Manchuria the British Government connived at aggression ; in Abyssinia they acquiesced in it. In Czechoslovakia and Spain democracy was in peril and it was deliberately betrayed, and the whole system of collective security was sabotaged by the very powers who had previously declared their firm faith in it.
>
> The Committee are convinced that the interests of Indian democracy do not conflict with the interests of British democracy or of the world democracy. But there is an inherent

and ineradicable conflict between democracy for India or elsewhere and imperialism and fascism.

The true measure of democracy is the ending of imperialism and fascism alike and the aggression that has accompanied them in the past and the present—but the Committee cannot associate themselves or offer any cooperation in a war which is conducted on imperialist lines and which is meant to consolidate imperialism in India and elsewhere.

The Congress Working Committee Resolution, dated November 22, 1939, pin-pointed the issue :

The course of the war and the policy pursued by the British and French Governments, in particular the declarations made on behalf of the British Government regarding India, seem to demonstrate that the present war, like the World War of 1914-18, is being carried on for imperialist ends, and British imperialism is to remain entrenched in India. With such a war, and with this policy, the Congress cannot associate itself, and it cannot countenance the exploitation of India's resources to this end.

Things are put as clearly and as categorically as they can be. Then where was the hiatus between the Communist Party of India and the Indian National Congress ? *The question of who betarayed whom and what, arises here itself.* Why does Mr. Arun Shourie remain tight-lipped over this period of the Second World War, while libelling the Communists with charges of 'betrayal' of the 'do or die' war declared on August 9, 1942 ?

What were the political lions in the Congress Working Committee doing for full three years between September 1939 and August 1942, all the while they railed in resolutions against imperialism, Nazism, fascism and war, solemny pledging to fight against the menace of war and violence ? What prevented the Congress leaders from raising the slogans of 'Quit India' 'Do or Die' and 'Fight to the Finish' for three long years of war from September 1939 to August 1942 ? Why were the top Congress leaders—from Gandhi to Nehru and Patel—incapable

of a forthright condemnation of the British for its indiscriminate arrest and detention of hundreds of the Communist leaders and cadres, forcing a major contingent of the national movement to function with the disabilities and rigours imposed by underground life ?

It is no use hiding the truth that the leaders of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, the Congress and the Communists, had distinct understandings of the war, the tactics and forms of struggle required to resist the British imperialist war efforts, and to carry on mass, militant anti-imperialist struggle.

Both the Congress and the Communists started in unequivocal terms that the war began as an imperialist war, with two imperialist gangs ranged against each other. But when it came to the issue of political action to resist imperialism and fight, two divergent assessments of the war situation and two divergent tactics emanated, based on the two basic class points of view.

The Communists raised the slogan of "convert the imperialist war into a national liberation war against British imperialism." The leaders of the Indian National Congress on the other hand were looking for a 'change of heart' among the imperialists and pleading again and again for a British declaration of Indian independence. They wrote letters to the British Viceroy and his minions, and expressed 'grief' over the possible devastation of London, Paris and their monuments during the course of the war.

Gandhi, after meeting the British Viceroy Lord Linlithgow some time in the first week of September 1939, made a lengthy press statement on September 5, 1939, at Simla. He stated :

> Having, therefore made my position vis a-vis the Congress quite clear, I told his Excellency that my own sympathies were with England and France from the purely humanitarian stand point. I told him that I could not contemplate without being *stirred to the very depth by the destruction of London*—which had hitherto been regarded impregnable. And I was picturing before him the Houses of Parliament and Westminster Abbey and their possible destruction. *I broke down.* I have become

disconsolate. In the secret of my heart I am in perpetual quarrel with God that he would allow such things to go on.

Then commenting upon Hitler and his destructive thinking, etc., Gandhi wrote that

I am not therefore *just now thinking of India's deliverance.* It will come, but what will it be worth if England and France fall, or if they come out victorious over Germany ruined and humbled? (Emphasis added).

Again stung by a correspondent's 'spirited protest' against Gandhi's concern for English cities and alleged unconcern for German cities, etc., the Mahatma, under the caption 'Sources of Sympathy', wrote in *Harijan*, dated September 16, 1939 :

I should be as much moved by a contemplation of the possible destruction of Germany's monuments. Here Hitler stands in need of my sympathy. In assessing the present merits, the past misdeeds of England and the good deeds of Germany are irrelevant. Rightly or wrongly and irrespective of what the other powers have done before under similar circumstances, I have come to the conclusion that Herr Hitler is responsible for the war.

The Indian Communists unlike the bourgeois nationalists, saw from the very start, that the situation created by the imperialist war offered the greatest opportunity to hit British imperialism hard and liberate our Motherland. Two divergent reactions and views were there to see, and they emanated from two divergent class points of view, from two opposed political tactical lines towards the imperialist war, when two sets of 'imperialist brigands', as described even by Congress leaders, were at each others' throat.

But the Congress leadership, and Gandhi in particular, were for three years averse to organising any effective direct mass action to make the British 'Quit India' preferring the course of appeal to the British Viceroys, pleading for conciliation with British imperialism.

We, the Communists, did not agree with the Congress tactics and called them reformist, dilatory and compromising. In

our literature, and through our mass influence we exposed this stand as running counter to the interests of the Indian people, for it was essentially based on a conception that freedom from imperialism could follow from compromises with the imperial rulers.

The Congress leaders and other avowed anti-Communists unleashed a smear campaign, when the Communists proposed a change in the political tactical line following the entry of the USSR into the war and the formation of the anti-fascist coalition of Russia, Britain, USA and the rest of their allies in the world.

What necessitated this change in our political-tactical line? The change in the war situation was not simply the entry of the USSR into the anti-fascist coalition, though this factor was decisive in the given situation. The fascist conquest of Central and Eastern Europe was complete in one year; the French surrender was over by June 1940, i. e. nine months after Nazi Germany went to war; Great Britain was under virtual siege and deadly bombing by the Nazi Luftwaffe; the U.S. was humbled by Japanese fascism with the attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941. The invasion of the South-East Asian States, the march of Rommel's army into the African continent, the world fascist Axis embarking on the mission of world conquest and the attack on the USSR in June 1941 by the Nazi hordes— all put together brought about a basic change in the character of the war and its implications for the peoples and nations of the world.

The war that began initially as a war between fascist Germany and the Western imperialist powers, headed by Britain, transformed itself into a war of all the enslaved peoples of the world against the fascist Axis of Germany, Italy and Japan, and into an anti-fascist, people's war of liberation, notwithstanding the fact that in the war the British imperialists and its other humbled capitalist allies were destined to find themselves in the anti-fascist world camp. This was and is the Marxist understanding of the war ever since the second quarter of the year 1941, though it is true, that it took some

months for us to reassess the war situation and accordingly work out tactics.

The question that needs a serious analysis by any student of Indian history, is why the Indian National Congress despite its prolamation denouncing Nazism and fascism as the manifestation of evil and organiser of war, despite its leader's assertion that they were not "just now thinking of India's deliverance" in the months of September and October, 1939, gave a 'do or die' call in the month of August 1942 when the fascist menace to the world had increased several-fold.

Once again we cite what was said in the Congress Working Committee's Manifesto on September 14, 1939, on fascism and Nazism :

> The Congress has repeatedly declared its entire disapproval of the ideology and practice of fascism and Nazism and other glorification of war and violence and the suppression of the human spirit. It has condemned the aggression in which they have repeatedly indulged, their sweeping away of well-established principles and recognised standards of civilised behaviour. It has seen in fascism and Nazism the intensification of the principle of imperialism against which the Indian people have struggled for many years. The Working Committee must therefore unhesitatingly condemn the latest aggression of the Nazi Government in Germany against Poland and sympathise with those who resist it.

The Manifesto went on to add :

> The true measure of democracy is the ending of imperialism and fascism alike and the aggression that has accompanied them in the past and present. Only on that basis can a new order be built up. In the struggle for that new world order, the Committee is eager and desirous to help in every way. But the Committee cannot associate themselves or offer any cooperation in a war which is conducted on imperialist lines and which is meant to consolidate imperialism here and elsewhere.

The Congress opposition to the British imperialist war effort remained more or less a wordy warfare with the British Viceroy and his officialdom. the correspondence between Gandhi and

the Viceroy being as voluminous as to require two volumes of the Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi. But nothing effective was done for three years to translate the declaration of non-cooperation with the British war effort, until the 'Quit India' resolution of August 8, 1942, came.

The investigative reseacher, Mr. Shourie has not a word to say as to why the Congress Working Committee dragged its feet. Nor is there a world of acknowledgement and appreciation for the Communists who, as active advocates of a militant resistance against continued Baitish rule, were thrown in their thousands behind bars and driven to underground life.

The most charitable interpretation of the Congress tactics of remaining inactive during the period 1939-42 to suddenly assume a militant posture in 1942, can be that the leadership did not grasp the qualitatively new shift that had come about in the war situation in the year 1941-42.

We are of the opinion that the Congress leadership was not true to its words in the years between 1939-1942 and its war cries against fascism, Nazism and British imperialism, because the Congress Working Committee's understanding of the nature and character of the war, either in the former phase of pre-1942, or in the post-1942 phase, was utterly opportunistic and reformist, reducing the whole political-tactical line during the war to one of bargaining, haggling for freedom from the British. Even the ultra radical slogans of 'Quit India', 'do or die', and 'fight to the finish' were meant more as threats than slogans for action. The resolution was released to the press and the entire leadership offered itself to be herded into detention camps, leaving the millions leaderless.

It is true that there was a spontaneous outburst and the Congress activists did do their best to resist the war efforts of the British. It is claimed that as many as ten thousand persons lost their lives in this 'Quit India' and 'do or die' struggle, besides several thousands being jailed. Nobody dare question the sacrifices and the inspiration behind these militant activists in 1942-43, though such anti-war activites according to us, proved harmful to the cause of war of liberation against world fascism.

However, the question under discussion is not how many martyrs there were in the 1942 struggle. If the number of martyrs could decide anything we could cite the glorious record of Communist sacrifices and close the argument.

The 'Do or Die' struggle was allowed to die down within a year with all the political consequences such a struggle entailed. The volumes of correspondence continued between Mahatma Gandhi and the Viceroy, Home Secretary Richard Tottenham, Maxwell and many others including the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, Lord Amery, etc. Most of these letters, while formally reiterating the demand for declaration of Indian independence, contain several statements, virtually fawning before the British Government.

A whole volume of such letters to the British Government by Gandhi exists not only for the period between September 1939 and August 1942, but the correspondence continued from 1942 to 1944 even from the prison, the Aga Khan Palace. On May 27, 1943, Gandhi wrote to Richard Maxwell :

> The mass movement as the resolution sanctioning it said in so many words, was sanctioned in order to promote an India-wide effort on behalf of the allied cause, including the cause of Russia and China, whose danger was very great in August last, and from which, in my opinion, they are by no means free even now.

If the danger of the allied cause was really held at heart, and the entire August 1942 agitation was sanctioned 'in order to promote an India-wide effort on behalf of the allied cause', why then is the Communist's principled opposition to disrupting the war effort and production denounced as betrayal of the Indian freedom movement ? How can it be interpreted as collaborating with the alien imperialists against the Indian National Congress ? Lord Samuel levelled the charge that,

> they have not merely abstained from action, but the Congress has deliberately proclaimed the formula that it is wrong to help the British war effort by men or money, and that the only worthy effort is to resist all war w th non-violence.

Mahatma Gandhi, in his spirited reply to this charge of Lord Samuel asserted on May 15. 1943 :

> This charge shows to what extent the British public has been misled by imaginary stories, as in the Government of India publications, statements have been torn from their context and put together as if they were made at one time or the other in the same context.

He maintained that the Congress adhered to non violent resistance in the struggle for national liberation 'however imperfectly', and asserted :

> But it has never made any pretence of war resistance through non-violence. The disturbances that took place after August 8 were not due to any action on the part of the Congress. They were due entirely to the inflammatory action of the Government in arresting Congress leaders throughout India at a time which was psychologically wholly wrong.

This is what is called in common parlance, 'blowing hot and cold' It was being agreed on the one hand that the fascist war danger was on the increase, and on the other that there took place serious disorganisation of the war effort against the fascist menace. Why was there this disorganisation and disruption ? Because of British provocation, not because of the August Resolution of the Congress Working Committee and its understanding by the Congress activists, and the common men and women of India.

Let us cite a passage from Gandhi's letter to P. C. Joshi which gives Gandhi's understanding of the war in its second phase :

> Your answer to my first question provokes a further question for your reply. I understand that although the chief actors among the allied powers are by no means inclined towards real democracy, you think that by the time the war ends their designs will be confounded and that the people all over the world will suddenly find self-expression and overthrow the present leaders. Among the peoples, according to the answer, I am entitled to include us, other Asiatic and Negroes; for that matter perhaps also the proletariat of

Japan and Germany. If such is your belief, I must confess that I do not share it but I keep myself open to conviction. Meantime I suggest that the title 'Peoples' war' is highly misleading. It enables the Government in India to claim that at least one popular party considers this as a Peoples' War. I suggest too that Russia's limited alliance with the Allied powers cannot by any stretch of imagination convert what was before an imperialistic war against the Nazi combine, into a peoples' war.

Holding the view that I do, it is superfluous for me now to answer your argument that "this war has split the world into two camps". Between Scylla and Charybdis, if I sail in either direction, I suffer shipwreck. Therefore I have to be in the midst of the storm. I suggested a way out. Naturally, it has been rejected because the powers that be do not want to relax their grip on India. As I am composing this letter to you, I have read and re-read your argument. Every paragraph offends, for to me it lacks reality. Please believe me that my prejduice against your party has nothing to do with my examination of your answer to the first question. (Mahatma Gandhi's letter to P.C. Joshi, dated July 30, 1944).

During the first phase of the war, let us remember, Gandhi was writing in 1939 that,

rightly or wrongly and irrespective of what other powers have done before under similar circumstances I have come to the conlusion that Herr Hitler is responsible for the war.

Again, Gandhi wrote on September 30, 1939 in *Harijan* that his sympathies were wholly with the allies,

willy-nilly this war is resolving itself into one between such democracy as the West has evolved and totalitarianism as it is typified in Herr Hitler.

In the second phase of the war, when the victorious war-march of the fascist axis was on the ascendency, the Working Committee's sole spokesman, Mahatma Gandhi, declared that he found no difference between fascism and imperialsm and failed to see any aggravation of the menace of fascist conquest of the world. He observed on July 14, 1943. :

Let us sum up my attitude. One thing and one thing for me is solid and certain. This unnatural prostration of a great nation—it is neither 'nations' or 'peoples'—must cease if the victory of the allies is ensured. *I see no difference between fascist Nazi powers and the Allies.* All are exploiters, all resort to ruthlessness to the extent required to achieve their end. America and Britain are very great nations, but their greatness will count as dust before the bar of dumb humanity whether African or Asiatic. They and they alone have the power to undo the wrong. They have no right to talk of human liberty and all else unless they have washed their hands clean of pollution. That necessary wash will be their surest insurance of success, for they will have the good wishes—unexpressed but no less certain—of millions of dumb Asiatics and Africans. Then, but not till then, will they be fighting for a new order. This is the reality. All else is speculation. I have allowed myself however, to indulge in it as a test of my bona fides and for the sake of explaining in a concrete manner what I mean by my proposal.

The following from the disscussions of the Congress Working Committee, dated April 27, 1942, reveals the then state of its thinking and assessment of world events. Protesting against the British refusal to hand over national defence to the representatives of the National Liberation Movement, they observed: "*Japan's quarrel is not with India. She is warring against the British Empire. India's participation in the war has not been with the consent of the representatives of the Indian people.* (This was so for all the three years between September 1939 to August 1942-MB). *It was purely a British act. If India were freed her first step would probably be to negotiate with Japan.*"

During the course of Working Committee discussions, Jawaharlal Nehru remarked :

A draft like this weakens their (the British Government) position. They will treat India as an enemy country and reduce it to dust and ashes. They will do here what they did in Rangoon.

The whole background of the draft is one which will inevitably make the world think that we are passively lining up with Axis powers. The British are asked to withdraw. After

the withdrawal we are to negotiate with Japan and possibly come to some terms with her. The terms may include a large measure of civil control by us, a certain measure of military control by them, passage of armies through India etc.

Further the same Congress Working Committee's draft went on to add :

This Committee desires to assure the Japanese Govt. and people that India bears no enmity either towards Japan or towards any other nation. India only desires freedom from all alien domination .. *Therefore the Committe hopes that Japan will not have any designs on India...*

As against this let us quote the 1939 statement of the Congress Working Committee (September 14, 1939) which had described fascism, whether it was of the German, Italian or Japanese variety, as a great menace to humanity. It maintained :

The Congress has repeatedly declared its entire disapproval of the ideology and practice of fascism and nazism and their glorification of war and violence and the suppression of the human spirit. It has condemned the aggression in which they have repeatedly indulged, their sweeping away of well-established principles and recognised standards of civilised behaviour. It has seen in fascism and nazism the intensification of the principle of imperialism against which the Indian people have struggled for many years. The Working Committee must therefore unhesistatingly condemn the latest aggression of the nazi Government in Germany against Poland and sympathise with those who resist it.

The leader of the Indian National Congress, Gandhi, condemns the growth of German nazism, Italian fascism and Japanese militarism, while extending sympathy to the cause of Britain, Russia, China and France, showing extreme concern and horror at the prospective destruction of the British Houses of Parliament, Westminster Abbey and other monuments, at the hands of the fascist aggressors. In the same breath he abhors the characterisation of the war against these dark forces of the fascist axis of Germany, Italy and Japan as an anti-fascist

world war, as a peoples' war and as a war for the liberation of the whole of mankind from the threatened fascist slavery.

A BOURGEOIS DILEMMA

Two classes, two measuring rods, two divergent interpretations and two different motivations! As on every other question, so on the issue of characterisation of the Second World War, the two divergent outlooks—that of the Communists and the Congress—were diametrically opposed. One is proletarian outlook which gives rise to international solidarity among workers and peoples and the other is the bourgeois outlook which breeds chauvinism.

We repeat, Congress leadership failed to understand the nature of the Second World War. In the first phase when nazi Hitler, fascist Mussolini and militarist Tojo were engaged in the war against the British, French and other imperialist powers, for full three years the Congress leadership was caught in a dilemma. While they did proclaim that it started as a war between nazi Hitler and imperialist Britain unlike the Communists they did nothing effective to fight British imperialism except correspond and negotiate with the British Government.

The Congress Working Committee and its undisputed leader Gandhi were too passimistic and hesitant to launch an assault on the British during the years 1939-1942, a mass national assault that could probably have brought the British rulers to their knees, compelling them to sue for a settlement. Thus, extreme hesitancy and prevarication held back the hand of the Congress leadership from launching the 'Do or Die' type struggle against the British imperial rule. The period of these three years of procrastination in launching a nationwide mass struggle against British rule is sought to be justified on one pretext or the other. Not a word of self-criticism and self-introspection is ever found in the documents or in deed in the annals of Congress history. No where is any mention of that sort to be found in the entire Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, nor a word of appreciation of those, including the Communists in India, who advocated and initiated militant resistance against British rule, and were critical of the Congress dilatory tactics.

The 'militancy' of the Congress Working Committee began to rise only as the fascist menace of world conquest steadily rose. If in the first stage of war, they wobbled and resisted all proposals for active struggle against British imperial rule, in the next phase, when the threat of the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo axis increased several-fold, the militancy and moral indignation against Hitlerite aggression, began to ebb in the statements of the Congress Working Committee, and its leaders arrived instead at a stage of political despair.

To conclude, the Congress Working Committee failed to realistically assess the growing strength of the fascist menace to the freedom, democracy and indepedence of all nations, including British-enslaved India in the midst of its struggle for national independence. Therefore they could not appreciate the fact that the anti-fascist phase of the world war could justifiably be characterised as a Peoples' War.

It was thus really an anti-climax when the Congress Working Committee, after categorically condemning the Japanese aggressors for their invasion and conquest of Chinese and other Asian territories, went on record with the atrocious statement that "Japan's quarrel is not with India".

At a time when vast sections of humanity were groaning under the heel of fascism, the Congress leadership totally underplayed the threat it posed for the peoples of the whole world and went to the extent of even proposing negotiations with Japan, if necessary. This betrayed complete bankruptcy of political understanding.

JUDGEMENT OF HISTORY

History showed unmistakably that in fact it was an anti-fascist People's War. Following the defeat of the fascist bloc, the imperialist powers who under compulsion had to ally with the USSR in the anti-fascist camp and anti-Axis coalition were severely undermined. Weakened imperialism was unable to check the victorious march of the Chinese revolution and the scores of victorious national liberation movements that were unleashed. The entire peoples of Europe were liberated from the nazi yoke; several Asian and African countries were liberated from the clutches of fascist Italy and militarist Japan. The

British were forced to quit India in the year 1947, although they had retained their grip through the years 1939-40 and 1942-43. Scores of national libration victories followed. If this was not anti-fascist people's liberation war, then what was it ?

Well, it is more than 40 years ago that all these matters were understood and argued out. Truth, honesty and modesty demand introspection and retrospection by the Indian Communists, and more so by the Indian National Congress leaders representing the present day ruling party. After all, the total strength of the Communist Party in India did not then exceed a bare *five thousand*, while the Congress commanded the confidence of the tens of millions, nay, the entire national liberation movement at the time. The truth is not of 'Communist betrayal', but letting down of the cause of Indian freedom and the cause of the world people's liberation by the leaders of the Congress.

It is also true in one sense, that neither Communist support to the anti-fascist war effort nor the Congress hostility to it, played any *decisive* role in deciding the fate of the war. Communist support to the war effort came in handy for our Congress patriots to brand them as 'stooges of the British' and 'the agents of Moscow,' before the enraged Indian masses ranged against imperialism. The canard no doubt paid good dividends, though the 'Quit India' struggle collapsed within a year or so, and four full years of negotiations, talks and deals were required, from 1944-47, to vivisect India on communal lines and to effect the transfer of political power to the Congress in the Indian Union and the Muslim League in Pakistan. The British did not quit for five years after the Quit India struggle of 1942. And they quit only in the year 1947, after splitting India, and giving us the Hindu-Muslim conflict and the two independent State forms to subserve the same imperialist ideal of 'divide and rule' in a new form under new conditions.

TACTICAL ERRORS

Yes ! The CPI which was basically correct in both the phases of the war—inter-imperialist as well as anti-fascist—had

gravely erred on certain tactical measures. In the course of the struggle against the world fascist bloc, its edge against the British rule became somewhat blunted. Its support to the anti-fascist war effort became indistinguishable from support to the British rulers' war policies and efforts. It was rightly misunderstood by vast sections of the patriotic masses.

But the CPI was honest and courageous enough to frankly admit its tactical errors as long back as at the beginning of the year 1948. There was a self-critical report which ran into 80 pages. It was published and distributed throughout the country, the correct lessons drawn from it, and imbibed in practice. All that need not be repeated here.

Such moral courage and political honesty was also expected from the Congress leaders. But to our great regret neither they nor their intellectual pen-pushers dare adopt such a course. They shudder at self-introspection and are mortally afraid of any self-criticism. They aspire to thrive on anti-Communist slander and self adulation.

III

It is on the 'confidentiality' of the documents, that Shourie claims to have exposed the covert deals of the CPI with the imperialist Government. The charge and consequently the attempt to malign the Communist movement would have had substance only if the public posture of the Party had been at variance with what is contained in the so-called 'confidential memorandum' submitted by the CPI to the then Government of India offering cooperation in the war effort.

In a historical sense there is nothing 'confidential' in such correspondence since the letters are addressed to the Government and they automatically become public property. That is how Arun Shourie has got them.

There was absolutely no secrecy or 'confidentiality' regarding the assessment of the changed situation in the course of the world war or the two divergent views on the appropriate political tactical line to be adopted. These views were openly hostile to each other. The CPI stood for active and principled support to the war-effort against the fascist Axis, while the Congress was opposed to supporting such a war effort without securing a declaration of Indian independence from the imperialists. The resolution of the Congress Working Committee of August 8, 1942, and the raising of the slogans of 'Quit India', 'Do or Die', saw the Congress programme being transformed into one of active opposition to and the sabotage of the British war effort. This was not a principled opposition but again emerged as a 'manoeuvre' to wrest from the British a 'prize' denied to them so far by the compromised anti-imperialism of the Congress leadership. No better proof of this can be found than in the volte-face in Congress estimates of the importance of the outcome of the struggle against fascism for the national movement, in particular. The Congress propagated the irrelevance

of a victory for the anti-fascist allies in determining the destinies of the enslaved Indian people and the rest of the subjugated peoples of the world. The Congress which had earlier seen in the fascism and nazism the intensification of the principle of imperialism, now changed its stand completely. The Working Committee was in no way concerned with how the active pursuit of their line affected the world forces fighting against fascism.

Could a leadership propagating such an understanding among the Indian masses honestly claim that its concern was to see the initiative of a free Indian people unleashed against the fascist threat to peace and freedom ?

Unaware of the real history of the policy of compromise pursued by the Congress leadership, Shourie is so impressed by the sudden radicalism of the Congress stand in 1942 that he fails to see the opportunism inherent in its position. This ignorance is, at best, the source of his anxiety to unearth pro-imperialist deals in the line and functioning of the CPI. Mr. Shourie would have done well to have acquainted himself with the history of the national movement before embarking on this futile exercise. From its inception the CPI symbolised the irreconcilability of imperialist interests with those of the Indian people, and faced the wrath of British imperialism. The Peshawar, Kanpur and Meerut conspiracy cases brought against the emerging Communist movement in India bear eloquent testimony to this, even as they constitute a glorious chapter in the history of the Indian revolutionary movement.

Perhaps a page from the early annals of Congress history may help Shourie to appreciate this sharp contrast between the Communist tradition and the compromising postures of the Congress leadership who chose the British as their model patrons, while always bargaining for economic and political concessions. To cite :

> The Congress, under the control of the moderate leaders, proclaimed its loyalty and support to the imperialist (1914-1918) war in resolutions adopted at each of its four annual sessions during the war, and even at the Delhi session in 1918 at the close of the war passed a resolution of loyalty to the king and congratulations on 'the successful termina-

tion of the war'. In return, the Congress was treated with official favour : the 1914 Congress was attended by Lord Pentland, Governor of Madras; the 1915 Congress by Lord Willingdon, Governor of Bombay, and the 1916 Congress by Sir James Meston, Governor of United Provinces, the Government representatives being received with ovations. Representative Indian leaders in London at the time of the outbreak of war hastened to offer their support to the Government. The Congress deputation then in London, including Lajpat Rai, Jinnah, Sinha, and others, sent a letter to the Secretary of State proclaiming their conviction that the princes and the people of India will readily and willingly cooperate, to the best of their ability, and afford opportunities of securing that end by placing the resources of their country at his majesty's disposal for a speedy victory for the Empire. (R.P. Dutt, *India Today*, pp. 332-33)

IGNOBLE COMPROMISES

The bourgeois-landlord leadership subsequently also deliberately chose the path of reformist opposition, and was busy inventing ever new techniques to prevent the masses from militant anti-imperialist activities. The entire history of the Indian national movement, under the leadership of the Congress and Gandhi, is a living monument of ignoble compromises with the British imperialist rulers. Gandhi took special pride in stating that his was the line of compromise, conciliation and reformism, and he drew applause from several British statesmen on this score.

Indeed, Mr. Shourie, it will take far more than four myopic slipshod articles to wipe out the real history of the freedom struggle and attempt to lionise the Congress High Command, even in its 'Quit India' phase, while portraying the Communist as stooges of the British and agents of Moscow.

In the same strain of lionising, Shourie laments the fact that the CPI, in one of its pamphlets published in 1940,

> declared that the Congress represents the bourgeoisie,—that the bourgeoisie fears the masses more than it hates the imperialists, that it is afraid of launching a struggle involv-

ing the masses against the British because it apprehends that a struggle started against the British will eventually turn against itself.

But as we have demonstrated earlier, the Congress essentially was and is, the political representative of the bourgeoisie and landlords, pursuing its chosen path of capitalist development, just as it continues till today its line of active collaboration with foreign finance capital. The ruling party's moves to mortgage India's economic sovereignty through the IMF loan is recent damaging proof of this. Because Mr. Shourie chooses to remain silent on this issue, it does not cease to be a fact of history.

Shourie further bemoans the fact that Gandhi, 'the main symbol of the national movement', "was lampooned attacked, exposed and railed at", by the CPI. For the same reason he cites the CPI political criticism directed against Subhas Bose for his line of activity during the anti-fascist war.

If the Congress leaders, in their hostility to the CPI's political-tactical line of supporting anti-fascist war efforts, retained their respectability while calling the Communists 'agents of Moscow' and 'stooges of the British rulers', and Shourie follows them uncritically, why does the CPI stand 'exposed' because it accused them of serving the cause of fascism and its 'fifth column' in the country? For the simple reason that the different class perceptions and approaches, sharply evident from the freedom movement onwards, are thus sought to be obscured in order to make the history of this period no more than the events that are officially owned.

Thereby what is sought to be denied are the possibilities which an alternative class approach offered to the Indian people, from the time of the freedom struggle onwards, for they even today threaten the class standpoint of the Congress and constitute the major alternative to its misrule. On the question of Subhas Bose and his role, Shourie and other like-minded critics of the CPI are fond of depicting Subhas Bose as the uncompromising fighter for Indian independence, and any criticism of his stand during the period of the anti-fascist war is dubbed as slander,

as caricaturing his allying with the Japanese forces. While of course it would be erroneous to question Subhas Bose's motivation for the political line he adopted, there is absolutely nothing wrong or slanderous in pointing out, as we did, how his tactical line was harming the anti-fascist cause.

But why should one find fault with the CPI for its criticism of this political line? What was Gandhi's reaction when a journalist said to him that,

> people are happy when Subhas Bose says on the radio that there are no differences between him and you, and when he says you are now out to fight for liberty at any cost

Gandhi, in fact, replied :

> But I suppose you know that there he is wrong and I cannot possibly appropriate the compliments he is paying to me. 'Liberty at any cost' does not exist in my dictionary. It does not, for instance, include bringing in foreigners to help us in our liberty. I have no doubt this would mean exchanging one form of slavery for another, possibly much worse.
>
> Further, I do not feel flattered when Subhas Babu says I am right. I am not right in the sense he means. For there he is attributing pro-Japanese feelings to me. If I were to discover that by some strange miscalculation I had not realised the fact that I was helping the entry of the Japanese into this country, I should not hesitate to retrace my steps. As regards the Japanese, I am certain that we should lay down our lives in order to resist them as we would resist the British...Was there the slightest suspicion that we wished victory to the Axis arms in order that the British may be humbled and their power in India destroyed ?

Gandhiji asked the friend in order to disabuse him of any such a notion. The friend further questioned him :

> You do not hear the radio messages? I do most assiduously. They interpret your writings as if your leanings were in favour of the Axis powers and you had now veered round to Subhas Babu's views about receiving outside help to

overthrow the British rule. I would like you to clear your position in this matter. Misinterpretation of your known views has reached a dangerous point.

To which Gandhi replied :

I am glad you have asked the question. I have no desire whatsoever to woo any Power to help India in her endeavour to free herself from the foreign yoke. I have no desire to exchange the British for any other rule. Better the enemy I know than the one I do not. I have never attached the slightest importance or weight to the friendly professions of the Axis powers. If they come to India they will come not as deliverers but as sharers in the spoil. There can, therefore, be no question of my approval of Subhas Babu's policy. The old difference of opinion between us persists. This does not mean that I doubt his sacrifice or his patriotism. (*Harijan*, August 2, 1942)

Does Shourie want to claim that Gandhi alone had the exclusive right to be critical of Subhas Babu's line, at that stage, and that if the CPI exercised the same right, it becomes a libel on Subhas Bose? Double standards for an honest historical researcher!

REFORMISM AFFIRMED

Shourie should note a further point. When Gandhi was asked : "Is not Subhas Babu right when he ascribes to the High Command, including of course you, a reformist and a liberal tendency ?", he asserted :

Of course he is right. Dadabhai was a great reformist. Gokhale was a great liberal; and so was Pherozeshah Mehta, the uncrowned king of Bombay Presidency. So it too was Surendra Nath Banerjee. They were, in their days, the nation's tribunes. We are their heirs. We would not have been, if they had not been...It is his own prudence that holds him. And in that way he is as much reformist and liberal as I am.

The terms 'reformist', 'liberal' and 'anti-revolutionary' etc., are political attributes ascribed to some people by some other critics. It is no crime to use such description. But Mr. Shourie fulminates at the CPI for characterising Gandhi as a reformist, a label that Gandhi was apparently proud of affixing to himself. To incite the ignorant and the uniformed against the Communists, pretending faith and loyalty to 'Gandhism', we must point out, is more in the nature of cheap jibes than serious polemics.

Still continuing this theme, Shourie quotes a statement from P. C. Joshi's letters to Gandhi to show, through the CPI leadership's sharp reaction to some of Gandhi's letters, the defiant attitude of the Communists to even Gandhi. Shourie probably hoped to benefit from the official deification of Gandhi which is obstructing the most determined attempts to objectively evaluate his role in the freedom movement, but surely honest research demanded that the reasons for this criticism be provided.

In one of the letters addressed to P. C. Joshi, Gandhi attached a long enclosure from a letter written to him by A. Kaleswara Rao, a prominent Congress leader from Andhra Pradesh. The following is the full text of the enclosure :

> They (Andhra Communists-MB) enacted dramas in the commune in the theme of every one of wnich there was shooting, execution of bloody murder. The student members were made to act as executioners or murderers with hands painted red. They made it a rule to get cooked flesh every day in the commune and every member must sit at the common table. Hereditary vegetarians like Brahmins and Vaisyas, including students, were purposefully taught to eat flesh so as to feel no abhorrence to violence. One Brahmin MA told me that he took to flesh-eating because Gandhi was insisting on non-violence. Another Vaisya, B. Sc., told me that he got freedom from the use of wretched khaddar from that time, which he had been using for more than twenty years. He became an ardent champion of flesh-eating. They held classes in the yard there. They were anti-Gandhi, anti-truth, anti-non-violence, anti-village

industries and advocated sexual anarchy in their speeches. In one of those meetings one of their leaders declared Gandhi as the Rasputin of India, There is a book written by Engels, which they studied in which he advocates group marriages or twin marriages (two wives for two husbands jointly) and condemns monogamy as the bourgeois invention to suppress women's freedom. They act as spies and informers with the police against ordinary Congressmen, particularly against the nationalist students, youth and ryot workers whom they consider their chief rivals. They get secret instructions from their party leaders to use sticks and beat their opponents in order to suppress them, besides handing them over to the police even by giving false information.

Comments on such spurious concoctions are unnecessary, but they highlight the depths to which the Congress propaganda stooped to attack Communism, appealing to all that was most backward in our society. Afraid that even this might fail, blatant distortion and lies were resorted to. The book in question is none other than Engels' famous work, **The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State** where the 'facts' as given by Kaleswar Rao can be easily verified in which no sentence has been written at random, but is based on immense historical and political material. The distortions made of it illustrate at best the author's political and philosophical infantilism. But the relevant point for us here is that such attacks were not only consciously encouraged by the party's leadership, for Kaleswara Rao was a leading lawyer and a prominent Congressman of Vijayawada, but that Gandhi was ready to use such material and send it on to P. C. Joshi.

It was in reply to this that P. C. Joshi wrote to Gandhi on September 12, 1944, for which Shourie tries to take us to task :

> I may as well give, in the very beginning, our reaction to your letter as a whole. If my own father had written to me what you have written I would not have answered his letter and I would never again have gone to meet him. I am writing to you because you are the nation's father, it will be

unpatriotic on my part to get angry with you, even when you insult and humiliate us... I know you do not mean it but your ignorance of our views and your prejudices against our party are so great that you do not even realise what you are writing. *(Correspondence between Mahatma Gandhi and P. C. Joshi-PPH June 1945, pp, 23-24)*

Let us make it absolutely clear to our critics and readers alike that the relations between Mahatma Gandhi and the Communist Party were not of a 'spiritual' character, but were of a purely political nature. Gandhi never concealed his irreconcilable hatred to the philosophy and doctrine of Marx, nor did we ever hide our utter disbelief in the so-called 'truth' 'ahimsa', 'non-violence' and 'passive resistance' preached by Gandhi.

It is futile to introduce sheer sentimentalism in evaluating this question by stating that the Communists had no regard for Gandhi. Our disregard was not to his person as an outstanding leader of the national movement, but to his political ideological and philosophical views.

In pursuit of his goal of proving 'the Communist betrayal', Shourie now makes another charge. Not satisfied with dubbing the Communists as 'agents' and 'enemies of the Indian freedom movement', he seeks to prove that the CPI was also acting as the agent of Jinnah and Muslim League.

After mentioning some publications of the C P I such as **Work for Congress-League Unity, Manifesto of the Communist Party of India for the Unity Week** and **On Pakistan and National Unity,** etc., he then goes on to make the mutilated summary of the contents of the above documents. He claims that the "Communist Party was demanding a National Government in public, but in private assuring the then British Raj that the slogan need not be taken seriously since the war effort could go ahead from success to success without such a National Government of Congress and Muslim League combine." Although, at the same time, he is forced to admit that the Communists were doing mass propaganda for

Congress League unity and the constitution of a National Government, with characteristic flair Shourie nonetheless advances to his preconceived conclusion, that "**here was a non-Muslim Party supporting the ever helpful Muslim League**".

Before analysing Shourie's charge against the Communists let us first see whether they were the only ones to change their position in response to changing conditions. The Congress had been experimenting and evolving its position on the issue of communal unity from the inception of the Muslim League in 1906.

Let me cite the statements of Gandhi on this issue.

Answering the question, Is Congress a Hindu organisation? Gandhi wrote, "Neither life nor institutions are governed by logic. Obviously the Congress felt the necessity of a communal adjustment for the political advancement of the country, and the Congress League Pact of 1916 was born. Ever since that time the Congress has made communal unity a plank in the Congress programme" (*Harijan*, November 18, 1939).

However, writing on Hindu-Muslim unity, in the *Harijan*, in January of the same year, Gandhi's observations reflected the wide gap that was evident between the major political forces that the two communities identified with, "The Muslim league is a great organisation. Its President was at one time an ardent Congressman. He was the rising hope of the Congress... The League contains many members who were whole-heartedly with the Congress, during the memorable Khilafat days. I refuse to think that these erstwhile comrades can be as bitter in their hearts towards their fellow workers of yesterday, as their speeches and writings today will show. It is, therefore, wrong of Congressmen and Congress organs if they are bitter against the League or its individual members." He further stated :

> I have not lost hope that I shall live to see real unity established between not only Hindus and Muslims but all the communities that make India a nation. If I know the way to achieve it today, I know that I have the will and strength to take it, however difficult and thorny it may be".

By March 1940, Gandhi was forced to face the reality of the vivisection of India. He observed :

> But this is not all. The Congress will not coerce Muslims or any minority. That would not be a non-violent approach. The greatest coercion is British coercion. My hope in desiring a Constituent Assembly is that whether the Muslims are represented by the Muslim League mentality or any other, the representatives when they are face to face with the reality will not think of cutting up India according to religions, but will regard India as an indivisible whole and discover a national, i e., Indian solution of even specially Muslim questions. But if the hope is frustrated, the Congress cannot forcibly resist the express will of the Muslims of India. Needless to say the Congress can never seek the assistance of British forces to resist the vivisection. It is the Muslims who will impose their will by force, singly, or with British assistance on an unresisting India. If I can carry the Congress with me, I would not put the Muslims to the trouble of using force. (*Harijan*, March 23, 1940).

By April 1940, Gandhi saw no other solution than that "the Muslims must have the same right of self determination as that of the rest of the Indians". Writing in *Harijan* he said :

> In the present instance there is nothing to prevent the impartial rulers from declaring their will in unequivocal terms that henceforth India will govern herself according to her own will not that of the rulers as has happened hitherto. Neither the Muslim League nor any other party can oppose such a declaration. For the Muslims will be entitled to dictate their own terms. Unless the rest of India wished to engage in internal fratricide, the other will have to submit to Muslim dictation if the Muslims will resort to it. I know no non-violent method of compelling the obedience of eight crores of Muslims to the will of the rest of India, however powerful a majority the rest may represent. The Muslims must have the same right of self-determination as

the rest of Indians. We are at present a joint family. Any member may claim a division

Thus so far as I am concerned, my proposition that there is no swaraj without communal unity holds as good today as when I first enunciated it in 1919. (*Harijan*, April 6, 1940)

On July 12, 1942, Gandhi stated :

The Congress and the League being the best organised parties in the country may come to terms and set up a provisional government acceptable to all...
And this may be followed by a duly elected Constituent Assembly.

Even in May, 1943, addressing a letter to Jinnah, Gandhi stated :

Why would not you and I approach the great question of communal unity as men determined on finding a common solution, and work together to make our resolution acceptable to all who are concerned with it or are interested in it ?

From the above quotations it is clear that the Congress was also trying to keep pace with the rapidly changing situation, though without much success. The fact that the anti-imperialist sentiments which, from the earliest manifestations in the 1857 mutiny, had united Hindu and Muslim against the common enemy, now found political expression in the two separate organisations identified as representative of majority and minority communal interests, was a reality to be contended with. The CPI, trying to view the Muslim communal question as a nationality issue, while simultaneously striving its utmost for Congress-League unity, which alone, it felt, could wring a National Government from the unwilling hands of the British rulers, was critical of the League's explicit programme of mobilising the Muslim masses on a religious platform. But it erroneously interpreted its success in rallying the minority as expressive of the emergence of a 'nationality' consciouness.

In self-critically examining its erroneous stand, the CPI analysed the concrete conditions underlying its mistaken understanding. It thus corrected its stand. This approach can by no means be interpreted as resulting from lifting chapter and verse from Stalin's writings on the National Question. Shourie, however, is satisfied with imputing motives as the 'proper' method of historical analysis !

The situation prevailing at that time was such that the vast masses of the Muslims in the country had come under the firm sway of the Muslim League leadership, a factor that could not be ignored by any serious political party. To roundly denounce the League as a pro-British Communal and reactionary party was not a solution to the problem facing the country, as it would have condemned the vast Muslim masses as people lost to the cause.

The British were playing their own game to drive a wedge between the Hindu and Muslim communities as an integral part of the 'divide and rule' policy. The Congress was trying different solutions to allay the apprehensions or misapprehensions of the Muslim League leadership, that Swaraj meant, in the given context, Hindu majority rule which was totally unacceptable to the League. The Muslim League, under the leadership of Jinnah was increasingly succumbing to the assurances given by the British that they would not come to any settlement with the Congress, bypassing the League, which thus came to exercise a sort of veto over the transfer of political powers into the hands of the Indian National Congress.

The pressure of these internal conditions threatening the struggle for independence, the imperative need to forge Congress-League unity, to quickly pave the way for the formation of a National Government to defeat the imperialist manoeuvres, combined with the need to make the maximum contribution to the anti-fascist war—these and these alone were the motive forces for the CPI and its proposed solutions to the Hindu-Muslim tangle.

What ultimately was the outcome of the struggle to achieve Hindu-Muslim unity and prevent the country from communal

vivisection ? History has proved that the Congress and the League, the former increasingly identified with the aspirations of the Hindu (population) failed to defeat the British policy of communal divide and rule, and finally succumbed to the British conspiracy. Both failed to forge 'Hindu-Muslim communal amity' in order to unitedly confront the British. Whose guilt it was in the main, whether that of the Congress or of the League leaders, is now, largely irrelevant though the League, under the leadership of Jinnah, will have to accept the major responsibility for the communal vivisection of India.

Why did these two great mass organisations fail in forging unity and presenting a united front against alien imperialist rule ? Either blaming the mass of the people rallied behind these respctive organisations, or finding a scapegoat in the Communist movement and its faltering application of the theory of 'self determination of nationalities' to the Hindu-Muslim dispute, would be to miss the point that the real cause lay elsewhere.

The leaders of both the Congress and the Muslim League were the political and ideological representatives of the Indian bourgeois-landlord classes Both these sets of leaders had common vested class interests in several respects. *Firstly* they did not want to go 'too far' in their quarrels with the British rulers, and therefore moderated the struggle in both form and content. *Secondly*, both were intrinsically hostile to the working class and the peasant masses, as both saw in their movements a challenge to this vested class interest. *Thirdly*, as representing bourgeois-landlord interests both the leadership of the Congress and the League were susceptible to a communal ethos and culture.

The factor of religion and community are not *decisive factors* in constituting a nation or a nationality but in the conditions then obtaining the demand of the Muslim League leadership for a separate State of Pakistan ultimately became irresistible and inescapable.

When religious revivalism was made the principal plank by the leaders of both the Congress and League to rouse the

masses against alien enemy and for national independence, it was communalism that gained the upper hand. To draw inspiration for the struggle against the foreign British rule, the glory of past Hindu and Muslim empires had begun to be hailed as the respective 'golden eras' of Hindu and Muslim masses. This was all the more blatantly so with the minority Muslim community.

Both the Congress and the League leadership were vehemently opposed to launching united class and mass actions of the workers and peasants, against the Hindu and Muslim capitalists and landlords. The common bonds that could have been forged in the course of agrarian and anti-capitalist struggles alone were the surest guarantee of forging Hindu Muslim mass unity and sustaining it in the struggle against foreign British rule. But the absence of such common peasant struggles, and more important, the open opposition to such united mass actions of the Hindu and Muslim peasantry against the Hindu and Muslim landlords by both the Congress and League leaders, drove a wedge between the vast peasant masses of the country on communal lines, preventing their class unity, solidarity and common consciousness.

It was thus the hostile attitude of both leaderships that prevented the furtherance of communal unity which could have developed in the struggle against the common class oppressors and exploiters. The very prospect of such a mass unity of workers and peasants making up 90 per cent of the Indian masses, constituted a threat to the Congress and League leaders. Thus the whole question of Hindu-Muslim unity did not resolve itself into a deeper class unity that cut across the communal divide, but was reduced instead to 'pacts' 'agreements' 'manoeuvres and countermanoeuvres'—all of which played into the hands of the alien British rulers.

Let us cite an illustrative instance of the attitude of Gandhi which symbolised the dominant thinking of the Congress leadership.

Gandhi, in his reply to Sri Jaya Prakash and Shri Sampurnanand, in *Harijan*, dated January 20, 1940, stated :

It has been suggested to me by a Congressman wielding great influence that as soon as I declare civil resistance I would find a staggering response this time. *The whole labour world and the kisans in many parts of India will, he assures me, declare a simultaneous strike.* I told him that, if *that happened*, I should be *most embarrassed and all my plans would be upset*. I must confess that I have no positive plan in front of me...I hope I am not expected to knowingly undertake a fight that must end in anarchy and red ruin", (Collected Works of Gandhi, Vol No. 41, pp. 116-117).

Such then was the opposition of the Congress leaders whenever the possibilities of a militant anti-imperialist action on a massive scale arose. It was this conservative and reformis, attitude to the united struggles of the workers and peasants that was responsible for allowing, encouraging and perpetuating the communal separatist outlook at the expense of the anti-imperialist, nationalist consciousness. If such were the expressed fears of the Congress High Command, which explicity espoused secularism, one can imagine the response in the Muslim Leaguet manned, at different levels, by Mullahs, Moulvis and 'Assili Musalmans'.

The truth of this analysis is borne out by the fact that the problem of Hindu-Muslim unity still remains an intractable issue, which is now being openly utilised by the ruling classes and ruling parties of the States of the now divided sub-continent, to maintain their rule despite rising mass discontent.

Mr. Shourie's fretting and fuming against the CPI for its fervent advocacy of Congress-League unity during 1942-45 does not, and cannot, absolve the real culprits, the bourgeoise-landlord leaderships of the Congress and Muslim League.

The communal partition has not solved the basic problem of Hindu-Muslim unity, either on the Indian sub-continent, as a whole or in the Indian Union, Bangladesh and Pakistan, taken separately. In India, the Hindu-Muslim problem is once again assuming frightening proportions. Communal riots are on the increase. Hardened communal political parties and socio-religious organisations are growing. Hindu communalists are now

found in keen competitiion with Muslim and other religious 'fundamentalists'. Would Shourie like to blame the Communists for this situation?

Learning from the mitstakes in the application of the nationality question, the Indian Communists have been upholding the thesis that India is a multi-lingual, multi-ethnic and multi-national country. That is why they fought for reorganisation of the States on a linguistic basis.

While an honest self-appraisal of their mistakes has led the Communists to evolve their strategy and tactics on the national question in conformity with the theory of Marxism-Leninism on the National question, the Indian National Congress had made a complete volte face on the national question in India. Since Shourie's researches do not deal with such truths, let us state the historical facts.

It is known that the Indian National Congress, at its Nagpur session in December 1920, had adopted a new constitution, providing for as many as 21 provinces, mainly based on language for the purpose of party administration. From 1921, the Congress virtually discarded the British administrative provinces, becoming increasingly dependent on linguistic units for its work. At the Madras Session of the Congress 1927 it was decided that "the time has come for the redistribution of the provinces on a linguistic basis, a principle that has been adopted in the constitution of the Congress".

An All-Parties Committee was constituted by the India n National Congress in 1927; the Committee was presided over by Pandit Motilal Nehru, with Jawaharlal Nehru acting as its General Secretary. It submitted its report in 1928. It stated :

> What principles should govern this redistribution? (of provinces) Partly geographical and partly economic and financial but the *main consideration must necessarily be the wishes of the people and the linguistic unity of the area concerned.* It is well recognised that rapid progress in education as well as in general culture and in most departments of life depends on language, if a foreign language is the medium of instruction, business affairs and the life of the country must neces-

sarily be stunted. No democracy can exist where a foreign language is used for this purpose. A democracy must be well-informed and must be able to understand and follow public affairs in order to take an effective part in them. It is inconceivable that a democracy can do this if a foreign language is used. It becomes essential, therefore, to conduct the business and politics of a country in a language which is understood by the masses. So far as the provinces are concerned, this must be the provincial language.

Again, the Committee pointed out :

If a province has to educate itself and do its daily work through the medium of its own language it must necessarily be a linguistic area. If it happens to be a polyglot area, difficulties will continuously arise and the media of instruction and work will be two or even more languages. Hence it becomes most desirable for provinces to be regrouped on a linguistic basis. Language, as a rule, corresponds with a special variety of culture, of traditions and literature. In a linguistic area, all these factors will help in the general progress of the province

The Indian National Congress, in its Election Manifesto of 1945-46, again pledged itself to the principle of reorganisation of States on a linguistic basis.

Dr. Pattabhi Seetharammaiah, the well-known Congress leader, in his presidential address to the Convention on the Linguistic and Cultural Provinces in India, held in December 1946 in Delhi, stated :

For autonomy to be full and free the administration must be capable of being conducted by chosen ministers enjoying the confidence of the national leaders of the country. The last of these can only think and speak in their own mother-tongue and constitution of provinces must be such as to present the necessary homogeneity of language and culture subject of course to economic and financial self competence so that instruction in schools, administration in offices, argumentation in courts and representation in councils, may all be conducted in one and that regional language. Anything

short of this is a travesty of provincial autonomy and negation of federation.

But after the achievement of political independence in August 1947, with the Congress leaders stepping into office as the new Indian Union Government, a volte face occurred on the question. The Congress Government and its leadership at the *Centre* had decided to betray all their pledges for the reorganisation of States on a linguistic basis, and appointed a High Level Committee, comprising Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel and Pattabhi Seetarammaih, (the J. V. P. Committee). The intended purpose for setting up such a committee was clear enough, and the Congress leaders, like the former Moghul and British rulers, wanted to perpetuate the old administrative provinces, denying formation of linguistic states, true federation and democracy. Thus once again the national leadership, though not lacking in an understanding of the multi-ethnical, multi-lingual and multi-national composition and character of the Indian State, nor something of the pre conditions that would be required to create and cement national unity and integration, because of their own bourgeois nature and interests, at the last minute drew back from solving the tasks that history had laid upon the Indian polity. The country is still paying the tragic costs for that lack of will today—hence Nellie, hence Bhiwandi, hence all the ghastly riots that have taken such a griveous toll in all these last 37 years. Within a few years the same leadership was having to resort to cosmetic touches to try to contain the mounting social tensions that continued inequality was breeding. The needs of social development exert their own inexorable pressures. A decade after the British 'Disintegration of India' in 1947, the Congress Working Committee had to decide to appoint a Committee "to consider the whole question of national integration", under the Chairpersonship of Indira Gandhi.

Probing in the reasons for the spurt of communalism, separatism, etc., the Report of the National Integration Committee observed : "The unavoidable gap between the eagerness for equality and material gains and the meagre resources available for its fulfilment, has created a fiercely competitive atmosphere

in which man clings to the loyality with which he is most familiar, that is, his own caste or community. Ironically enough it would seem that progress had sharpened the sense of group exclusiveness of every kind. Nevertheless, the fact remains that it is only education in its widest meaning and application, linked with social and economic change, which can ultimately bring about true secularism. As the Congress Election Manifesto of 1957 declares, "Secularism does not mean lack of faith but the protection of all faiths and the encouragement of spiritual and moral values". As before, there are only words to substitute the action which would never take place.

The National Integration Committee met again on April 1961. Then it held a regular National Integration Conference in Delhi in September-October of the same year. This Conference too made a long list of similar recommendations. It also elected a National Integration Council which met on June 2 and 3, to remake the same recommendations.

This very National Integration Council was dissolved when the Sino-Indian border conflict in October 1962 provided a good excuse for its dissolution, as though the threat of Chinese intrusion had 'integrated' the nation, nothing more need be done.

But when alarm bells again began to ring, the National Integration Conference was reconvened first in 1968, and later in 1980, as a decorative cover for the continuing policy of no action.

It can be learnt from all this experience, that we Communists have always upheld the principle that the Indian Union should be really federal in character. The States should enjoy full autonomy, which is not to be equated or confused with the right either to secede or to undermine Indian national unity. This perspective informs our demand for reorganising Centre-State relations, for ending one party monopoly class rule and for builing a really strong, federal Indian Union, with States enjoying their due and legitimate autonomous rights.

People like Shourie, who try to mock at the Marxist concept of National Question would do better to feel ashamed

that the bourgeois landlord leaders of both the Congress and the Muslim League cut such sorry figures before imperialist intrigues sabotaging the Hindu-Muslim unity and fell victims to the most cruel, communal division of India.

Even today, neither the ruling Congress leadership nor the Muslim communal leadership realises with what fire they are playing when fanning communal passions and facing recurring communal riots in which the minority community is the wrost sufferer.

Similarly, both the leaderships, even today, fail to realise that they are living in multi-lingual, multi-national and multi-communal States in the Indian Union, Bangladesh and Pakistan, while doing their worst to destabilise the countries, denying the democratic urges and demands of different nationalities in the Indian sub-continent.

It is the CPI (M) and the other Left Parties that have some definite views on this entire question, and this we shall deal with in the next article.

IV

The bourgeois-landlord leaders of the Congress and the Muslim League woefully failed to understand that India was and is multi-ethnical, multi-lingual and multi-national in composition and character and that it demands special political skills and comprehension to maintain unity and national integrity. The creation of Pakistan as a separate state on the basis of religion proved to be totally non-viable. Even the establishment of a military dictatorship could not prevent the succession of Bangladesh. The strident fundamentalist posture adopted by the ruling class of Pakistan under Zia's regime, has not been able to suppress the demands for separate Sindhi, Baluchi and Pathan lands which are being voiced militantly today.

The Indian leaders too are proving themselves to be incapable of drawing the lessons to maintain the unity of the country. This is evident from the developments in Punjab, Assam and the increase in communal and casteist riots, the intensification of Centre-State strife, etc. The Congress leaders have come to decry the legitimate demands of States' autonomy characterising it as 'linguism', 'regionalism' 'parochialism' etc.

The fact that the political and administrative unity of India was 'imposed by the British sword' (to use a phrase by Marx) escapes their attention. Marx had observed :

> We do find Hindustan, when not under the pressure of the Mohammedan, of the Mughal, or the Britain, dissolved into as many independent and conflicting States as it numbered towns, or even villages.

Marx had visualised the economic integration of the country when he observed, "That unity, imposed by the British sword, will now be strengthened and perpetuated by the electric telegraph". The electric telegraph and other modern means of communication, trade and commerce, are no doubt, acting as unifying factors. But the pursuit of the bankrupt path of the

capitalist development imposes on the Indian bourgeoisie the necessity for allying with the reactionary landlord classes, thereby undermining the very political unity which they wish to maintain for the sake of availing themselves of a huge home market.

The Communist conception of sustaining Indian unity by restructuring Centre-State relations and making the Indian Union a real federal union is diametrically opposed to the unitary conception of the State held by the Congress leadership. The former struggles for greater democratisation while the latter based on narrow class interests strive to establish authoritarian rule and fosters national chauvinism. Scuttling of democracy and imposition of authoritarianism provides no solution to the problems facing the country. It is evident from the developments since the imposition of the Emergency rule by Mrs. Gandhi in 1975.

World history clearly demonstrates that capitalism has been unable to sustain the unity of different nations and nationalities. In the present day world situation when the contradiction between capitalism and socialism, inter-imperialist contradiction and the contradiction between imperialism and the newly liberated countries, are all getting intensified, it is becoming all the more difficult for the Indian bourgeoisie, which is forced to ally with the landlord classes, to maintain the unity of the country. The bankrupt capitalist path pursued by the Congress leadership coupled with obscurantist social and political ideologies cannot retain Indian unity and reforge national integrity which has been subjected to severe strains since 1960.

The ruling bourgeois-landlord combine of the country is unable to practise genuine secularism because in order to maintain its rule, it makes concessions to what is most backward, precapitalist and feudal in our society. The mass media and the education system in the hands of religious and casteist bodies are allowed to play havoc with secular values.

The Congress leadership's pandering to the backward Hindu sentiment on the issue of the cow slaughter agitation is clearly illustrative of the way in which the Congress leadership has

been actively instrumental in undermining national unity. They unashamedly disregarded what even Gandhi had solemnly averred on this question.

Mahatma Gandhi, under the caption 'Question Box' wrote in *Harijan*, dated April 27, 1940 :

> The Muslim Public need to be satisfied on a very important question. Will the Muslims be allowed to eat their national food – beef – under a Hindu majority Government? If you can satisfy the Muslims on this all important question, a great deal of knots will be solved. You should give a straight answer to this question in your paper *Harijan*.
>
> *I do not know how this question arises. For whilst Congressmen were in office they are not known to have interfered with the pratice of beef-eating by Muslims. But the theoretical question demands a clear answer. As a Hindu, a confirmed vegetarian, and a worshipper of the cow whom I regard with the same veneration as I regard my mother (alas ! no more on this earth) maintain that Muslims should have full freedom to slaughter cows If they wish, subject of course to hygienic restrictions and a manner not to mould the susceptibilities of their Hindu neighbours, fullest recognition of freedom to the Muslims to slaughter cows is indispensable for communal harmony, and is the only way of saving the cow.*

Led by Vinoba Bhave, the foremost disciple of Gandhi the movement against 'cow slaughter' was patronised by the Congress leadership including Mrs. Indira Gandhi negating the very secular principles that alone could forge the unity of the country The slogan of the anti-cow slaughter campaign, discrediting as sacrilegious the idea of eating beef, which is consumed not only by Muslims and Christians, but by several tribes and others in the country, was aimed at gaining the support of the Hindu masses by appealing to the most backward, anti-secular facets of their consciousness. And yet it is the secular Government that sanctions such campaigns !

It is apparent from this and numerous similar instances that it is the bourgeois-landlord ruling classes that are squarely responsible for disrupting national unity and are utterly incapable

of pursuing the policies that would foster communal amity in the country. Railing against Communists and mocking at the Marxist theory on the National Question does little to whitewash this reality.

The Communists, in fact, have proposed and struggled for alternative policies based on the Marxist theory on the National Question, to forge the unity of the country and promote communal amity. The record of the States ruled by the Left Front Governments illustrates the validity of the Communist understanding and practice on the vital question of maintaining communal amity.

Arun Shourie in compiling his charge-sheet against the CPI, full fortytwo years after its alleged crime, views erroneously, though characteristically, ideological-political questions as simple ethical ones. He uses value-loaded terms in assessing historical events when the need is for an objective analysis keeping in view the lines of the working class represented by the CPI and the bourgeois landlord leadership represented by the Congress.

The political question involved in the 1942 events is : while the CPI wanted to do its utmost against the Japanese and German fascist invaders of our land, who had designs to enslave the entire mankind, the Congress leadership went as far as to suggest a compromise with the invading Japanese on the plea of expelling the British. Before assessing the tactics that flowed from these two divergent assessments, one had to answer which of the two had proved to be essentially correct. Arun Shourie evades this basic qustion. He seems to think that the character of the Second World War which began as an inter-imperialist war between the imperialst and the fascist powers had remained unchanged for all the six years of the war.

Analysing socio-historical events involves both the capacity to differentiate between class forces, and to follow the changing balance of relationship at different stages of the developments of such events Shourie's failure on both counts leads him to the absured position that war is war and no more effort is required to grasp the true nature of the phenomenon. He does not recognise the global realignment of class and political forces

that took place in the six-year period of the war and the impact that this change in alignment had on the nature and the character of the war and its final outcome.

The Second World War had its beginning in the events of the early 1930s with the Japanese invasion of Manchuria and China, with the subversion of the Spanish Republic and the handing over of Spain to the fascists under Franco, and with the invasion of Ethiopia (then Abyssinia) by fascist Italy. By 1939 it burst into a full-scale war between British imperialism and its allies on the one-side and the fascist block led by Nazi Germany on the other.

At this stage imperialist interests, whether those represented by the established metropolitan States or by the fascist States aspiring to force a redivision of colonies, came into open confrontation with each other. Nazi Germany had not yet tilted the balance by over-running all of Europe and encircling Britain. Even more significant was the fact that imperialist forces had failed to direct a concerted attack against their common enemy, the Socialist Soviet Union.

This stage, according to the CPI, was the most opportune occasion to direct our national liberation assault on Britain, and to succeed in bringing it to its knees. The Congress Working Committee was prevaricating, panicky to summon the people to the streets and placing faith in docile appeals and degrading negotiations. Thus they lost the ideal time and occasion to decisively strike against the imperialists, and put the Muslim League on the defensive and possibly prevent the British conspiracy of India's communal vivisection.

By mid-1941 the situation had radically altered. The Axis powers had conquered Europe and had made rapid advances in Asia and Africa. The attack on the USSR was symbolic of the confidence of the fascist powers in their capacity to suppress conflict within the imperialist camp. The Congress Working Committee adopted a pseudo-militant posture at this juncture. It concealed its opportunism in toning down its criticism of fascism behind the slogan of "my national freedom first."

The CPI evolved its tactics on the essentially correct assessment of the changed character of the war. The CPI as early as

1948 made an exhaustive analysis of its shortcomings and errors to effectively integrate the struggle of Indian people against British imperialism with the struggle of the subjugated peoples of the world against the then growing menace of fascism. But this shortcoming in the tactics of the CPI cannot be so interpreted as to discredit the organic link between two necessary aspects of the common struggle against imperialist domination, and for liberation of mankind from the clutches of fascism.

The bourgeois leaders and their ideologues, on the other hand, unashamedly justify their sabotage of the mass anti-imperialist assault in the first inter-imperialist phase of the war and are found wanting in making any critical evaluation of their volte-face in the second phase of firece global anti-fascist struggle.

Six long years of utter political confusion, unparadonable wobblings and misadventures of the Congress Working Committee are conveniently whitewashed. No moral norms are invoked to judge the role of the self-professed recruiting seargents of the British during the First World War! Six months of delay in discussing and deciding a new political-tactical line by the CPI is condemned as "waiting for orders from Moscow"! Tactics flowing from an assessment of the changed character of the war different from that made by the bourgeoisie are termed betrayal! Such are the moral standards introduced in the vicious polemics against the CPI.

To try to deride Communists by defaming them as agents of imperialism is new invention by the bourgeoisie of the colonial and the semi-colonial countries who owe their parenthood to the western capitalist system and who are its docile and slavish imitators. Such tricks, however, only pay temporary dividends. They cannot obliterate the truth that Communists alone have proved that they stand firm against the exploitative system of capitalism and imperialism. It is this truth experienced by the toiling people as a fact of life that has earned them the respect and the support of the exploited and the hatred of the vested interests of the world. It is because of this that millions of Communists, all over the world, have been

slandered, imprisoned, tortured, and killed. It is because of this that no other school of thought in the annals of human history has taken such rapid strides as Marxism. There are no men and women other than the Communists who have laid down their lives in millions for the cause they are firmly committed to, namely, the emancipation of the working class and entire humanity from exploitation and wage slavery.

Anti Communism is an acute epidemic under the aegis of the daily-decaying capitalist social order. Having lost its potentialities as a socio-economic system to thrive and survive, its exponents have invented new degrading weapons of slander, calumny, lies and mayhem against the Communists.

In India bitter anti-Communism orginated in the class point of view and fears of the British imperialist rulers even before the different Communist groups united to form the nucleus of a Communist Party. The persecution of Communists, real and imaginary was a conscious policy as is evident from the Peshawar, Kanpur, Meerut and Madras conspiracy cases which implicated scores of Communism-minded youth of the day. The fledgling Communist Party was declared illegal, and remained banned for most of the time under British rule. The Home Ministry of the British Central Government was specially directed to deal with the Communists.

The National Congress leaders in this as in most other matters took the cue from the imperialists. They did not hide their extreme dislike and even hatred of the ideology of Marxism-Leninism declaring it to be hostile to the scriptures and hence anti-national. The conservative identification of national culture and civilisation with religious conceptions inherent in such an obscurantist outlook was to become a marked feature of the Congress attitude to nationality and nationhood. Even Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru who wrote copiously commending the Marxist-Leninist doctrine and its economic aspects in particular, did not conceal his innate hostility to the cause of Communism. During the Parliamentary debate on the dismissal of the Kerala Communist Government and imposition of President rule in 1959, Nehru made it clear that he would any day prefer the

rule of the Jana Sangh in India to that of the Communist Party, since the former was intrinsically *national* while the latter was not representative of such a 'national ethos'.

The Congress, pledged itself to non-violence, truth and ahimsa, as far its forms of struggle against the British rule were concerned. Gandhi even resorted to several fasts to cleanse the Congress soul if some 'violence' took place during the course of popular struggles. It even resorted to the extreme steps like withdrawing action programmes if stray 'violence' took place during the course of popular struggles against British rule.

But the very same apostles of non-violence were not averse to using violence in attacking hundreds of Communist meetings, demonstrations and its cadres who were selling party journals. They assaulted individual Communists. The assaults took place in regions of Andhra, Bengal, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Bombay and everywhere in the country. The climax of these goonda attacks of the Congress on the CPI and its members was the six hour siege and assault on the Communist Party Central Headquarters in Bombay on January 23, 1946 when 60 Communists were wounded and property worth over one lakh was damaged.

Hundreds of tons of obscene literature was produced and distributed by the Congress depicting Communists as advocates of sexual anarchy, as blood-thirsty vagabonds, as people who demolished places of worship and as people sold to British imperialism. Many of us personally witnessed 'dramas' depicting the Communists as immoral wrecks and imperialist agents. Of course, all this blasphemy went on unprotested by the Congress leaders, even after their release in 1944 45. No doubt such a large-scale maligning and slandering of the Communists by the Indian National Congress and its tributaries had been undertaken to grievously damage our political image among the masses of our people. The Congress leadership hoped that it would enable them to escape the responsibility for all that happened, including the communal vivisection, followed by mass-scale communal massacres and migrations, skilfully engineered by the imperialists. How is it that Mr. Arun Shourie missed all these well-documented misdeeds in the archives ?

Whether the Communists compromised with imperialism or the Congress and the League leaderships betrayed the anti-imperialism of the Indian people would become clear if one honestly studies the developments of the period intervening between August 1942 and August 1947.

On may 6, 1944, Gandhi was released on the ground of health. He immediately declared that 'do or die' mass civil disobedience portion of the resolution of August 8, 1942, stood automatically cancelled. By June 1945, the entire Working Committee was released. An official statement signed by Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhai Patel and G.B. Pant on behalf of the Congress on September 21, 1945 declared: "No movement had been officially started by the AICC or Gandhiji." Was it "this movement that was opposed by the CPI !"

We cite a few instances from the developments of 1946 as recorded by G. Adhikari in *Diary of Events—1946* to indicate the trend of events which reveal the real face of the bourgeois leadership and its deadly hostility to any militant anti-imperialist mass action.

INA leaders released on January 4 ;

Gandhi advises students against participation in politics and strikes on January 9 ;

R.I.N. ratings in Bombay go on strike on February 19 ;

RIAF (Madras) go on strike in sympathy of RIN on February 25 ;

Trichy strike on the 25th in sympathy with RIN ratings on February 25 ;

Sardar Patel declares RIN strike as ill-advised on February 26;

On the same day Gandhi says; believe in British sincerity and leave aside barricades ;

And on February 28 there was complete hartal in Madura in sympathy with the RIN strike ;

On March 1, 1946, the strike of Jabalpur Sepoye begins ;

On March 4, Sardar Patel again laments : Congress prestige suffered due to the RIN strike.

On March 15, RIN prisoners in Mulund Camp on hunger strike;

On the 18th, Gurkha soldiers in Dehradun revolt;

On the 19th, Policemen in Allahabad go on hunger-strike and on March 22, the Delhi Police went on hunger strike for wage-increase;

On April 3, ten thousand Bihar policemen strike for rise in wages;

On May 2, North-West Railway workers observe four-hour strike;

On June 6, 1946, Bombay Congress Ministry refuses enquiry into RIN shootings;

On July 11, one lakh all India Postal Workers' strike takes place, on July 23, four lakh industrial workers strike in support of the postal strikers.

The Congress and the League leadership were horrified at all these uprisings of the people, the high watermark of which was the revolt of the men of the Royal Indian Navy who had replaced the Union Jack by the three flags of the Congress, the Muslim League and the Red Flag.

While the Bombay trade unions and the Communist Party supported the RIN strike Committee's call for strike and hartal and gave a call for a general strike in Bombay which was met with brutal police firings, Congress President Maulana Azad declared, "Strikes, hartals and defiance of temporary authority of the day are out of place." Out of this upsurge was born the Congress-League Provisional Government which accepted the evil British plan of communal partition of the country, quietly forgetting all the brave talk of facing a civil war to save the unity of India. Was this not an anti-climax ?

If at all one is to talk of 'betrayal', the biggest betrayal thus shaped itself, the chief architects being the leaders of the Congress and the Muslim League from August 1943 when the

1942 struggle actually fizzled out and the leaders of both the Congress and Muslim League, who were in possession of Indian masses, compromised the growing anti-imperialist upsurge in order to gain political power in 1947 on the debris of Indian unity and over the graves of the millions of communal riot victims.

Not only the postwar people's upheavals and police and military revolts against the British Raj were betrayed by the bourgeois landlord leaders of the Congress and the Muslim League, in order to smoothen the deal with the British, the moment the Congress-League Provisional Government was set up in August 1946, but also it actively ranged itself against any and every anti-imperialist struggle. Here again the edge was directed against the Communists since they were firmly upholding the postwar unheavals, demanding the successful liquidation of the British rule, and the ending of the social domination of the feudal landlords and autocratic native princes who remained the loyal props for the perpetuation of the British rule.

Take the case of the Nizam of Hyderabad who strove to bargain for an independent status for the feudal state of Hyderabad, and had started negotiations with the British and the Pakistani rulers. The Indian National Congress did practically nothing effective to checkmate such evil designs. The Communist Party and the Andhra Mahasabha of the Hyderabad State launched a popular revolt to demolish the feudal structure of the state of Hyderabad. Armed resistance began in July 1946 to face the armed onslaughts of the Nizam's police and military. The fighting peasants of Telangana faced the wrath of the so-called Razakars, the private armed bands of the Nizam, who were raiding villages, looting properties, raping women and burning houses. The Congress Government at the Centre remained a mute spectator to this valiant fight of the Indian peasantry.

The irony of the situation is heightened when one contrasts the practice of the Congressmen against the pronouncements of Gandhi on Indian princes. Writing in *Harijan* on October 7, 1939 Gandhi had said :

...every Indian prince is a Hitler in his own State. He can shoot his people without coming under any law. Hitler enjoys no greater powers. If I am not mistaken, the German constituion does impose some limits on the Fuhrer.

Even after independence the Congress Government, did precious little for full two years, except trying to enter into a shady deal with the Nizam. The Communists and the Andhra Mahasabha not only stood up against the armed attacks of his police, army and his private Razakar armed hordes, but virtually drove them out from nearly three thousand villages, covering a population of over three million people.

Then came the so called police action and 'liberation' of the people of Hyderabad from the feudal yoke of the Nizam Nawab on September 13, 1948. On the face of it, the police action was an act of liberation, and the Nizam and his armed forces surrendered in three days, but in reality it was the 'liberation' of jagirdars, zamindars, deshmuks and all the feudal satraps of the Nawab from the 'seige' of the peasant partisans of Telangana.

Leaflets were distributed from the Government's military planes that land belonging to the deshmukhs, jagirdars and landlords should be handed over to the 'rightful owners'. The rebellious Telangana peasantry, under the leadership of the CPI and Andhra Mahasabha, had redistributed around ten lakh acres of land seized from the illegal possession of feudal landlords, during the course of their struggle between July 1946 and September 1948, and established village people's administration in around 3000 villages, covering an area of 16 thousand square miles, in four districts. In this anti-Nizam struggle of the Telangana peasantry as many as 50 thousand people suffered tortures in police camps, ten thousand people were put in prisons under detention from three to ten years, several thousands of women were raped and millions worth of peasants' property was looted by the armies of the Nawab during 1946-48 and subsequently by armymen of the Congress Government.

By the September 1948 action in Hyderabad, the real anti-people face of the Congress was exposed. It stood in defence

of the Nizam and his feudal jagirdars and deshmukhs while the CPI stood in the forefront of the agrarian revolution, cruelly repressed and suppressed by the Congress Government.

When the Telangana peasantry, under the leadership of the CPI, was fighting the autocratic rule of the Nawab, the Congress leadership, now in office, struck a shamless deal, and accepted him as the Raj Pramukh assuring him of keeping the Hyderabad State intact, denying the Telugu, Kannadiga and Maharashtrian people of the composite Hyderabad state their legitimate right to join their respective linguistic brothern in the adjoining regions.

Having employed 50 thousand armed personnel and engaging in murderous attacks on the Communists and their peasant mass following for full three years—from September 1948 to October 1951—the Congress 'patriots' worked systematically to destroy the Communists and militant peasant action in defence of its rights not only in Telangana Andhra, but in the entire country. They also thought that by killing off hundreds of Communist cadres, under the pretext of deaths in 'armed encounters' they could drain the CPI of competent cadres and mass support and thus sweep the polls in the 1952 general elections unchallenged.

We have argued at length that the two opposed view points those of the Congress representing the bourgeois-landlord class interests and the Communists representing the working class and other toiling people have always been hostile to each other. The Congress has been striving its utmost to destroy the Communists politically and the Communists have been trying to dislodge the Congress from its ideological-political stranglehold on the vast mass of the Indian people. It would do some good to 'researchers' of Shourie's type to look into the balance sheet.

During the period 1942-45, the Communists were maliciously slandered as 'agents of Moscow', 'agents of imperialism' and 'agents of Muslim League' and yet they stood up as the foremost champions of militant anti imperialist struggles waged in the country during 1939-42 and 1945 47. When the masses were rallying behind the Communist movement to give a crush-

ing blow to imperialism, the Communists came to be slandered and attacked as votaries of 'violence'. Since none of this propaganda had cut any ice, the Communists were sought to be crushed with the aid of newly acquired state power, first in the Telangana struggle and later by virtually banning the Party, declaring it illegal in several parts of the country, detaining thousands of its leaders and cadres and killing scores of comrades in jails.

But what was the upshot? The 'Communist Goondas' were elected in both regions of Andhra and Telangana trouncing all the tallest Congress candidates in the first general elections in 1952. As many as 19 members of the Lok Sabha belonging to the CPI and its allies came from the Andhra and Telangana regions, helping the CPI to emerge as the *first opposition group* of thirty in the first elected Lok Sabha of India.

Is that all ? In the then British carved composite Madras State, the Congress was roundly defeated by the combined left and democratic forces of Andhra, Tamil Nadu, Malabar and the Kannada part of the Madras province. The true disciples of Gandhi embarked on the now only too familier tactic of making shameful alliances with casteist and communal forces and resort to the misuse of Constitution to undo the electoral verdict. It was by using all sorts of unscrupulous manoeuvres that C. Rajgopalachari, the retired Governor General, was foisted as the Chief Minister on Madras province.

The Communist Opposition took up the challenge and unleashed the struggle for the formation of a separate Andhra State thus initiating the broad-based democratic struggle to defeat Congress machinations and compel it to abide by the long accepted principle of reorganisation of States on a linguistic basis. As a result of which not only the foisted Chief Minister had to go but also the British manufactured Madras Presidency had to be disbanded for good.

The story does not end here. The Indian people have not always been taken in by the anti-Communist slander of the kind Arun Shourie has recently undertaken to repeat.

Kerala elected the first ever non-Congress Government by voting the Communists to office in March 1957. Once again we find 'betrayers' and 'agents' winning the confidence of the electorate. The Congress leaders, unable to directly attack the elected Government because of the then growing friendship with the socialist USSR and China, resorted to opportunistic and unprincipled alliances with all conceivable casteist and communal sects, groups and parties under the leadership of the Nair leader, the late Mr. M. Padmanabhan to embark on the shameful 'liberation struggle' to oust a duly elected State Government.

Unable to contain the growing Communist influence, the Congress dubbed the Communists as 'Chinese agents' and the entire leadership, around a thousand was put under detention in jails exploiting the Sino-Indian border dispute. This malicious propaganda was convincingly rebuffed by the Kerala electorate which voted the CPI(M) as the largest single group in the Assembly in 1965 despite the fact that almost the entire leading cadres including the contesting candidates of the party were put behind bars, on the spurious plea of developing threat of armed insurgency by the CPI(M) !

In 1967, the Congress was roundly trounced at the hustings in as many as ten States. The CPI(M) came to lead two of these non-Congress Governments in West Bengal and Kerala. That was the beginning of the disintegration of the Congress monopoly of power. That was also the beginning of the period when the toiling people all over the country came to look upon the CPI(M) as the most consistent champion of struggle against the Congress misrule. The Congress resorted to most unscrupulous tactics in disrupting the Left Front in West Bengal and forging an anti-CPI(M) front in Kerala with the aid of the CPI and other casteist and communal groups. This anti-CPI(M) front government led by the Congress, including the CPI, got trounced in 1980, after a decade of unbroken rule of anti-CPI(M) front.

In West Bengal the Congress resorted to the misuse of constitutional powers and three new Assemblies were dissolved and

elections were held in a short period of about 2 years. It could not dislodge the CPI (M) from its prominent position in the State and resorted to semi-fascist terror during the period 1972-77. During this period 1200 Communist cadres were killed and 20 thousand uprooted from their hearths and homes. During this period more than 300 Communist cadres were also killed in Kerala.

In Tripura where the CPI (M) had become a dominent force, the Congress unleashed repression on the elected representatives keeping them under detention outside the State in order to perpetuate its foisted rule.

The imposition of the Emergency in 1975 when the Congress resorted to authoritarian rule, scuttling democracy was reflective of its total disintegration, utter incapacity to rule democratically and disillusionment of the people with its policies.

The Communists played a significant role in its rout in the 1977 general elections; in West Bengal, the CPI (M)-led front got a massive majority even though Janta rejected an electoral adjustment with the CPI (M). In Tripura also the CPI (M)-led front was triumphant, trouncing the Congress.

Again when Congress was voted back to power at the Centre in 1980, it was the CPI (M) alone that rebuffed its sweep in West Bengal and Kerala. During 1980 assembly elections Kerala witnessed the fiasco of the anti-CPI(M) front and the CPI(M) led front was elected to office.

Except for a very short duration, the Communists and their allies have been the single largest opposition group in the Indian Parliament since independence. The CPI(M) alone has 50 members, in the two houses of Parliament today besides other left groups like the CPI, the forward bloc, the RSP who number around another 30 in the two houses of Parliament.

The foregoing brief description of events would show that despite repeated attempts of the bourgeois-landlord classes, despite fierce political and ideological attacks, the Communists in this country, far from being decimated, have increased their influence several fold.

The developments of the last 42 years since the socalled 'betrayal' by the Communists clearly demonstrate that the 'betrayers' are in the forefront of the anti-imperialist struggle, have made immense sacrifices in defence of national unity and maintenance of communal amity and vigorously fought against the anti-people policies of the ruling classes While on the other hand, the Congress rulers of the country in the defence of whom Arun Shourie's 'research' articles stand are increasingly depending on imperialist aid closely collaborating with the multi-national monopolists and disrupting the unity and integrity of the country by pursuing the anti-people and anti-democratic policies.

Indian people are able to see that on all questions such as the nationality question, question of secularism and communal amity, maintaining the unity and integrity of the country, the Congress stands discredited. No other rightist Party including BJP is able to provide an alternative to the Congress misrule. It is the Communist movement which is in the forefront of people's struggles all over the country against the bourgeois landlord misrule. It is this growing influence of the Communist movement in the country and the decisive role the communists have come to play in providing an alternative to the Congress misrule that compels bourgeois ideologues to unleash false and motivated anti-communist propaganda.

The Communists are espousing the cause of Marxism-Leninism marching from triumph to triumph, Arun Shourie is advocating the cause of decaying capitalism which is on its death bed. Slanders would not reverse the course of history.

INDIAN INDEPENDENCE AND ITS BIRTHPANGS

India had attained political independence on August 15, 1947 after nearly two centuries of foreign British domination, initially under the armed brigandage of the East India Company and then under the direct rule of the British throne. It was an event of immense national and international socio-political significance – an event that clearly demonstrated the beginning of the end of the mightiest of the world imperialist regimes.

The question that interests the student of modern Indian history is what compelled the British to transfer political power in August 1947, and into whose hands, i. e. to which class or classes and which political party or parties, was political power transferred. Such a question is not merely of historical interest, but is also of crucial importance to an intelligent analysis and assessment of many facts of the current political development in our country.

Were the British imperialists, who ruthlessly suppressed the anti-imperialist liberation movement of 1921, 1931 and the Quit India struggle of 1942, compelled to part with political power in August 1947, two years after the allied victory over the world fascist axis of Germany, Italy and Japan ?

What was the nature and character of the political indepen-dence India gained ? Was it formal or real, a change from the direct to indirect rule, keeping the economic, military and diplomatic levers firmly in the former British rulers' hands ? Such question, it was true, arose mostly in the minds of the Communists. Theoretically equipped to delve into the intrica-cies of modern imperialism, the Communists could not share the euphoria of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalists who

neglected entirely the possibility of pitfalls inherent in such a transfer of political power.

Why were the Communists sceptical regarding the nature and content of the August 1947 transfer of political power to Indian hands, to the Congress in the Indian Union and to the Muslim League in Pakistan ? Lenin, as early as the year 1923, had drawn attention to the cunning device of imperialism and had advised Communists to be vigilant on this score. In his theses on National and Colonial questions, submitted to the Second Congress of the Communists International in June 1920, Lenin exhorted the world working class and its Communist Parties regarding "the need constantly to explain and expose amongst the broadest working masses of all countries, and particularly of the backward countries, the deception systematically practised by the imperialist powers, which under the guise of politically independent states, set up States that are wholly dependent upon them economically, financially and militarily. Under present day international conditions there is no salvation for dependent and weak nations except in a union of Soviet Republics".

Besides this warning of Lenin, the acceptance of the communal partition of India, imposed by the British, the continued membership in the British Commonwealth of Nations, the assurance for the protection of British capital in India, the acceptance of the continuation of the British Governor General Mountbatten, the wobblings in U. N. O. on crucial issues and voting with the U. S. imperialist bloc on most of the disputed issues of the day and the like, added to our apprehensions to doubt the character of national independence going to the extent of calling it formal and fake.

But as the course of history unveiled, things shaped differently, enabling the newly formed Indian Union and its bourgeois-landlord government to increasingly assert its political independence, forestalling the imperialist attempts to make it formal and fake. Here arises the question as to how it became possible for the new Indian ruling classes to resist the imperialist attempts at perpetuation of its domination and why the

imperialists failed in their evil designs as Lenin had warned in the year 1920?

Our ruling classes, the ruling Congress party in the main, continue to gloat over their political skill and diplomacy in 'cleverly' securing peaceful transfer of political power and, subsequently, 'consolidating' it with their able internal and external policies. Such boastful claims are no more than half-truths, hiding some fundamental objectives realities that have come to prevail in the international situation.

Firstly, the victory in the anti-fascist world peoples' war not only resulted in the destruction of one powerful wing of world imperialism, the fascist axis, but gravely undermined the positions of all the imperialist states, with the exception of the U.S.A. Secondly, the socialist Soviet Union has not only emerged as the victor against fascism, but the leading political and military force in securing that victory, enabling a number of countries in Eastern Europe and Asia to carry out successful people's democratic and socialist revolutions, and to bring into existence a formidable world socialist camp, checkmating imperialist attempts at expansion and aggression. And lastly, a post-war national liberation upsurge swept over the entire globe, gravely affecting even the armed forces of the colonial powers, as seen by the I.N.A. revolt and subsequently the R.I.N. revolt in India.

Most of the official historians of the Congress, as also the new crop of the Congress leaders, display their utter incapacity in grasping the significance of the international background and the new correlation of class forces that came to exist in the post-war era with the victory of the anti-fascist forces.

Moreover, the role played by the Soviet, Chinese and other Communist armed forces and the stupendous sacrifices made in smashing fascism and in undermining world imperialism, is either underplayed or ignored by most of the bourgeois leaders who were at the head of different national liberation movements of the colonial world. This arises from the anti-Communist prejudices of the bourgeois nature of the leadership of the national liberation struggles.

The bourgeois-landlord ruling classes of the third world countries clamour for enhanced socialist aid in order to bargain with the imperialists, to enter into more and more collaboration agreements with foreign finance capital and multinational corporations. In the new world situation they are able to utilise the contradictions between socialism and imperialism to pursue the path of capitalist development. They play down the principal liberation role of the world Communist movement and resort to the ruthless suppression of the Communist parties who oppose and expose the bankrupt path of capitalism.

In order to assess the nature of the Indian independence and examine the claims of the bourgeois leadership, it is essential to trace the historical developments that led to the formation of the Congress party as the main party of the bourgeoisie in India.

According to the available documents and historical accounts, the Indian National Congress came to be formed between December 25 to 31,1885, even though the circular invitations were sent in March 1885.

Here, mention must be made of the fact that the birth of such an organisation as Indian National Congress was not the brainchild of one or the other great thinkers of the time but a product of half a century of socio-political-cultural movements, preceding the formation of the Congress. These renaissance movements were not confined to one or the other part of the British India, though Bengal Presidency, especially Calcutta as the seat of the East India Company, first, and subsequently as the seat of the British imperial India, had produced pioneers in the field of socio-cultural-political reform movements.

C. F. Andrews and Girija Mukherji, in their book *The Rise and Growth of the Congress in India*, published in 1938, have observed that "Far more than anywhere else in the world, politics and religion in India have become mingled together in such a way that they can hardly be separated, however much we may try to do so." This, the authors think, is not the case with 'Hindu India' alone but is true of others too, and remark: "For in Islam as enunciated by the Prophet, religion actually

rules the State. We can see this same tendency at work even in comparatively recent times, for in the north the Sikh Khalsa has shown us how the Indian mind works towards political and social freedom in and through a religious awakening" (pp. 13-14).

The authors cite the birth of the Brahma Samaj, the Arya Samaj, the Rama Krishna Mission, the Aligarh Movement headed by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and the like, and note that "the new impetus at the beginning of the nineteenth century came first of all in the South from the reformed Churches of Europe". They also observe that Bengal had become the centre of most of the new stirrings : "It was natural and almost inevitable mode of advance, because Bengal was the first part of modern India to come into closest contract with the West, as the focus and centre of British rule."

Andrews and Mukherji further observe that "one of the principal reasons for this remarkable renaissance in Bengal at the beginning of the nineteenth century was undoubtedly the French Revolution of 1789-93", and those "new conceptions of social justice which the French revolution brought with it were startlingly fresh and strange. They created a different attitude of mind just as the ideology of Soviet Russia is attracting world-wide attention today. While the rest of India are still only slightly conscious of this new movement of human thought which had come to the West, Bengal was acutely awake" (*ibid*, pp 20-21).

It was not accidental that Raja Ram Mohan Roy was characterised as the "founder of Modern India as he was greatly attracted towards the liberal tradition in English education and English political history".

The same was the case with Rabindranath Tagore who described the influence of English literature on the Indian mind saying that "when I was young we were all full of admiration for Europe, with its high civilisation and its vast scientific progress, and especially for England which had brought this knowledge to our own doors. We had come to know England through her glorious literature, which had brought a new inspiration

into our young lives. The English authors whose books and poems we studied, were full of love for humanity, justice and freedom" (p. 80).

Tagore concludes that "all this fired our youthful imaginations. We believed with all our simple faith that even if we rebelled against foreign rule, we should have the sympathy of the West".

This we have cited at length to establish the simple fact that ideas, ideologies and corresponding men and organisations are not created arbitrarily or at the dictates of some persons or foreign powers but they are the objective reflections of a world process of growth and development, ideas, knowledge, science and litrature spreading from one end of the globe to the other. The lack of such scientific understanding leads to erroneous conclusions. Some officially backed scholars have tried to perpetuate the myth that the Congress leaders were 'original thinkers' inspired only by the native genious of the national past while the Communists take their inspiration from foreign ideas.

The origin, growth and evolution of the Indian National Congress, though inspired by the ideas of freedom and enlightenment from the West, have not been free from the evil of providing discarded religious robes to ever growing socio-economic-political events of the day.

Karl Marx's penetrating observation that over-religiosity and too much vegetarianism had spoiled Hindustan to the core, still holds valid when we see how religious, caste, communal and sect divisions are plaguing India even at the fag end of the 20th century. These divisions speak volumes of our ideological backwardness and poverty of scientific thought.

The simple fact that the way Indian subcontinent was brought under British imperialist control, the manner in which the modern world history from the 16th century to the present took shape, the manner in which different social and national liberation movements of the world had orginated and grown, and the particular process though which Indian national liberation movement had evolved, are independent and constitute an integral part of the single human emancipatory struggle. This

fact is often missed by the official Congress historians, an illustration of which is the history of the Congress written by Dr. B Pattabhi Seetharamaiah.

The first sentence of the first chapter of this official Congress history by Dr. Pattabhi begins with the utterly egoistic assertion that "the history of the Congress is really the history of *India's struggle for freedom.* For centuries the Indian Nation has been under foreign supremacy and the Congress has striven for half a century to free the country from this subjection" (emphasis added).

A closer examination discloses the fallacies underlying this seemingly correct statement.

Is it factual to state that there was no 'freedom struggle' till the Congress organisation was forged in the year 1885?

What about the First War of Independence or the so-called Sepoy Mutiny of 1857-58? Is it proper to relegate it as prehistory of the freedom struggle against the alien rule of the British? Similarly, is it correct to totally ignore the historical fact that there was a systematic disarming of the Indian populace, by the British between 1858 and 1885, reducing them to debasement and degrading slavery? C.F. Andrews, the closest collaborator of Mahatma Gandhi in several spheres of activity, writes: "It must be remembered that ever since 1857-58 the people of India had been disarmed, while on the other hand all weapons of powerful offense had been concentrated in British hands. During the years 1857-85 this disarming process was relentlessly carried out and all the heavy artillery was placed in British hands." What else was this twenty-eight-year-long struggle of the British except against the freedom loving Indians who could wield their own arms for the cause of their liberation?

Take the case of Raja Ram Mohan Roy who has come to be characterised as 'the founder of Modern India'. The Brahma Samaj, the Arya Samaj, the Ram Krishna Mission and other religious renaissance movements of the period were the reflection of the new awakening in the Indian society. The foundation of the Zamindary Association (Landlords) in November 1837, the starting of the British Indian Association in October

1851, the formation of Indian Association in July 1875 and a host of similar moves in the 19th century were nothing but the reflection of the period of growing awakening among the Indian people. It is true that these movments did not raise the slogans of liberation from British yoke, with the exception of the 1857 revolt, but they were laying the foundations for the new awakening of national advance and liberation. To treat all these as of little or no consequence and to date the Indian freedom struggle with the birth of the Indian National Congress in 1885, does no justice to the analysis of the historical evolution and the socio-economic-political conditions that gave birth to the freedom struggle.

The concept of 'Indian nation' and it being subjected to foreign supremacy for centuries as used by the official Congress historian, suffers from grievous drawbacks. That the Indian subcontinent was never, really, formed into a single political entity before the British imperialist conquest, though "successive invaders founded their empires on the basis of that unresisting and unchanging society", as Marx remarked, was a reality. India was neither moulded into a single political entity nor constituted into a 'nation' in its real and scientific sense. Its political unity was first forged under the British sword, and the Indian anti-imperialist movement, which has come to be called the Indian 'national' movement, had begun only after the British conquest of India and its cruel exploitative rule.

The bourgeois historians, including the official Congress historians, do not analyse international context of the birth of the organisations such as the Indian National Congress in the year 1885, and do not take into account the objective economic, political and social factors that impelled the birth of such organisations.

The following passage written by Karl Marx in the year 1881 on India provides such an objective background: "In India serious complication, if not a general outbreak, is in store for the British Government. What the English take from them annually in the form of rent, dividends for railways useless to the Hindus, pensions for military and civil servicemen, for Afgha-

nistan and other wars, etc., etc., what they take from them without any equivalent and quite apart from what they appropriate to themselves annually within India, speaking only of the value of the commodities the Indians have gratuitously and annually to send over to England – it amounts to more than the total sum of income of the 60 millions of agricultural and industrial labourers of India! This is a bleeding process with a vengeance! The famine years are pressing each other and in dimensions till now not yet suspected in Europe. There is an actual conspiracy going on wherein Hindus and Mussulamans cooperate; the British government is aware that something is brewing, but these shallow people (I mean the governmental men), stultified by their own parliamentary ways of talking and thinking, do not even desire to see clear, to realise the whole extent of the imminent danger. To delude others and by deluding them to delude yourself – this is: Parliamentary wisdom in a nutshell; *Tant mieux!...*"

These conditions gave birth to a growing mass discontent, a discontent which was also noted by certain English ruling circles who were politically far-sighted. One of the founder fathers of the Indian anti-imperialist movement, late Gopala Krishna Gokhale, in 1913, stated in London that "No Indian could have started the Indian National Congress. Apart from the fact that any one putting his hand to such a gigantic task had need to have Mr. Hume's commanding personality, even if an Indian had possessed such a personality, and had come forward to start such a movement, embracing all India, the officials would not have allowed it to come into existence".

Mr. A.O. Hume was a retired English official at Simla and "in earlier years in his official capacity, came into possession of several volumes of secret reports from the C.I.D. of those days which showed clearly the increasing volume of discontent among the *village people*. There were records even of conspiracies and secret societies... the peasants in different parts of India were on the verge of an *agrarian revolt*. In the Bombay presidency riots had already started. The years just before the Congress were among the *most dangerous since 1857*" (C.F. Andrews and Girija Mukherji, *op cit*, p. 128).

C.F. Andrews makes the poignant observation : "The time was fully ripe, as we have seen, for this all India movement. In place of *an agrarian revolt*, which would have had the sympathy and support of the educated classes, it (the formation of the Indian National Congress - MB) gave the rising forces a national platform from which to create a New India. It was all to the good in the long run that a revolutionary situation based on violence was not allowed to be created once again, for it could only have caused useless bloodshed and an increase in racial hatred" (*ibid*, p. 129, emphasis added).

Such was the motivation of A. O. Hume who "was like a man who saw impending disaster and desperately sought to prevent it". Mr. A. O. Hume went to England to meet several Members of Parliament to convince them of the necessity of organising a body such as the Indian National Congress to divert the growing agrarian revolutionary upsurge and the developing mass discontent into a constitutional and reformist channel. He also strove his utmost to convince the then Viceroy about the dire political necessity of such a step. The following story cited in Andrews and Mukherji's book from the Jubilee supplement of *The Hindu* would substantiate our point :

> While he was at Simla, Mr. Hume paid frequent visits to the Viceroy, Lord Dufferin, who had just then arrived in India as successor to Lord Ripon. During one of those visits the conversation turned upon Mr. Hume's aspiration for shaping and influencing English public opinion so as to start a movement for India's political unity and regeneration. Mr. Hume's idea was to rouse the conscience of the people of England by carrying on a persistent agitation in Great Britain with the support and encouragement of leading friends of India, both among Englishmen and Scotsmen, whether or not officially connected with India Lord Dufferin considered the question from a purely private sympathiser's point of view and expressed his opinion that such an agitation in England was foredoomed to failure, as all intelligent Englishmen were fully aware of the advantage of all kinds, economic, political, administrative, etc., which Great Britain

derived from her huge and passive dependency. He also convinced Mr. Hume that the latter could secure his own aims best by confining the agitation to India, for the present, and by making Indian public men all over the land to start, organise and develop to its full strength a national organisation in India itself, conducted with zeal and discretion by her own leaders under Mr. Hume's sympathetic and courageous lead (*ibid*, pp. 122-123).

Before we close this topic of the then prevailing objective and subjective conditions that led to the formation of the Congress in 1885, and how it was conceived by the British imperial rulers, one more passage may be strikingly instructive :

The first few years of the Congress history were remarkably free from any pronounced hostility from the side of the Government of India, though considerable anxiety soon became apparent and dislike showed itself in many quarters. Lord Dufferin himself had invited all the delegates of the Second Congress Session in Calcutta to his own garden-party as distinguished visitors. Lord Connemara, the Governor of Madras, had followed suit when the Third Session took place at that city. It has already been explained in this volume how the final suggestion that an All-India Congress should be held to deal with political questions, seems to have emanated from Lord Dufferin himself, in his conversations with Mr. A. O. Hume. It was therefore only in keeping with what had happened that the first relationship between the Government of India and the Congress should have been of a cordial nature (*ibid*, pp. 145-146).

In brief, such was the process of evolution of the Indian National Congress which is sought to be concealed by the bourgeois historians of the Indian National Congress.

Ignoring the origin and motives of the evolution of the Congress rooted in the objective conditions, these historians confine themselves to the struggles of 1921, 1931, 1941 and 1942, etc., in which there was restricted and limited mass participation, and thereby attempt to whitewash its conciliatory, compromising and reformist role. They highlight the episodes

of open confrontation with the British rulers while skilfully shielding the basically constitutional character of the Congress agitation.

By confining themselves to the events of 1921, 1931, 1941 and 1942, they hide the ugly truth that Congress was hostile to rouse the masses for action, especially the agrarian masses against the feudal, semi-feudal landlordism and pre-capitalist forms of exploitation. They conceal the facts that the Congress leadership was essentially representing the interests of the bourgeois-landlord classes and was orientated to Hindu communal outlook.

The Congress leaders gloat over their efforts to achieve Hindu-Muslim communal amity and about their fight against casteism and hated untouchability, etc. ; they always falsely and hypocritically claim that they stand for 'Daridra Narayan' 'Ram Raj', 'egalitarianism' and even socialism. Serving the vested interests and cheating the common masses with petty alms and empty promises has become the hallmark of the Congress, both before the transfer of power and later.

They are not shy of their disgraceful performance in the 'Quit India' struggle and its slogan of 'do or die' in which the leaders offered themselves to jails, left the masses leaderless and disowned all the spontaneous militant struggles, describing them as spontaneous violence of the masses.

They slander the Communists for their not participating in and opposing the 1942 struggle. The Communists opposed it on the ground that *such* a struggle at *such a juncture* was sure to aid the world fascist offensive and to cripple the anti-fascist, united onslaught. But when post-war upsurge swept India with army and navy revolts, with working class general strikes, with a series of policemen's uprisings, with militant peasant mass outbursts and with the surging States' people's movement in several princely States, the Congress leaders stood deadly opposed to them, denouncing them as detrimental to the cause of liberation struggle and as Communist inspired violence.

The bourgeois politicians and historians who often vainly

attempt to trace the British transfer of political power directly to the 'kick' by the Congress through its 1942 Quit India movement, conveniently ignore as to what transpired between the Congress and the British Indian Government. As early as July 27, 1944, Gandhi wrote to the Viceroy Wavell that he was "prepared to advise the Working Committee to declare that in view of the changed conditions mass Civil Disobedience envisaged by the resolution of August 1942 cannot be offered and that full cooperation in the war effort should be given by the Congress if a declaration of immediate Independence is made", etc. Gandhi further stated that "if there is a desire on the part of the British Government for a settlement, friendly talks should take the place of correspondence. *But I am in your hands. I shall continue to knock* so long as there is the least hope of an honourable settlement".

Why become angry with us when we criticise the Congress leadership that it was fawning and begging the British for negotiated settlement while uttering some brave words? Where did anything of 'Quit India' resolution of August 1942 remain operative till July 1944, as to offer the Viceroy that the Congress Working Committee can defer its implementation? From where did arise the idea of "full cooperation" in the war effort if the war as such was anti-people and pro-imperialist? Why utter indignified statements that "I am in your hands" and that "I shall continue to knock" at the doors of the Viceroy?

Such was the 'do or die' slogan and how it was conceived by the Congress leaders!

Gandhi wrote to British Prime Minister Churchill on July 17, 1944, complaining that Churchill called him 'naked fakir' expressing the desire to crush him. Then he proceeds to conclude the three-sentence letter with a degrading appeal that "I approach you then as such and *ask you to trust me and use me* for the sake of your people and mine and through them those of the world". What else was this except political surrender to the British bully, Churchill, the then Premier of England.

Any number of such instances can be cited from the

correspondence of Gandhi with the British Viceroy and his leiutenants in India. The craze for transfer of political power, even at the cost of India's communal vivisection, overwhelmed the Congress leadership, and that was how the so-called peaceful transfer of political power took shape.

The peaceful transfer was really not peaceful but was accompanied by ghastly communal riots in which lakhs of people perished, tens of lakhs of people were uprooted and millions of Muslims in India and Hindus in Pakistan had to remain as virtual hostages. Several lakhs of Hindus from the then East Pakistan and Sindhis from Western Pakistan had to, subsequently, migrate to India, under the name of 'refugees'—a term drgrading and insulting. These 'refugees' were the creation of the communal division of India, a division accepted as "inevitable" to effect the 'peaceful transition'.

The so-called peaceful transition of political power cannot be attributed solely or mainly either to the methods and techniques of peaceful satyagraha, Ahimsa and passive resistance, etc. It would be a travesty of truth to ignore or overlook the stark reality that tens of millions of men and women shed their blood and life to vanquish the monster of world fascism and severely undermine world imperialism. But for these blood-curdling heroism and sacrifices, the so-called peaceful transfer of power could have remained a day dream, and what resulted from the earlier passive resistance movements could have been the lot of the Indian people even in the year 1947.

The Congress historians, by not analysing the historical evolution of the Congress, tend to ignore the fact that it was more a movement and broad platform than a strict political party, prior to transfer of power, and that following the Congress assumption of office it has a become a political party of sorts. The sacrifices and struggles of men like Bhagat Singh, Sukh Dev, Raj Guru, Ganesh Sankar Vidyarthi and a host of heroes and heroines from Bengal, which had to its credit the glorious record of Chittagang Armoury raid, etc., find no place in the history of the national liberation struggle, accounting everything to the exclusive pride of the Congress, and today's Congress Party.

More than all, the role of the Communist Party of India, both before the transfer of power and during the last 37 years following political independence, is sought to be painted in dark colours by the bourgeois historians. The British attempted to exterminate the Communist movement in India by mounting an unrelenting attack against the CPI ever since its formation in 1920. And the Congress too has made futile attempts to destroy the Communist movement in India and its influence since 1942. All this was not accidental but the reward of the militant anti-imperialist activity of the Communists, an activity hated by both the imperialists and the bourgeois-landlord Congress rulers.

Ignoring the historical facts, the Congress leaders constantly broadcast that they secured peaceful transfer of power in August 1947 by their peaceful methods of passive resistance since the inception of the Congress in the year 1885, and more so since Gandhi entered the field in the year 1917. To put it mildly, this is sheer travesty of truth.

From the year 1944 to 1947, there were two big volumes of correspondence between the Congress and the British authorities, all aiming at arriving at a peaceful compromise with the British rulers, abandoning all efforts at Hindu-Muslim unity and united mass assault to snatch independence from the hands of the tottering British regime, and agreeing to a humiliating transfer of political power, accepting the shameful vivisection of India on the Hindu-Muslim communal basis. The sore thus caused for the Indian subcontinent, 37 years ago, is still pestering with no end in sight for the malady.

The national independence secured through "peaceful transfer of power" and through the acceptance of communal vivisection of the country—thanks to the victory of the anti-fascist forces, the rise of world socialist system and the surging post-war national liberation upsurge on a global scale—carried with it all the ugly weaknesses that made India in the past the prey to every adventurer that dared to invade. Divisive communal and casteist forces are offering a fertile soil for the US and other imperialist conspiracies to destabilise and dismember the country.

Centre-State relations are getting steadily aggrevated – the ruling Congress Centre striving its utmost to set up a unitary and dictatotial set up and the States struggling for genuine autonomy and an honourable place in the Indian Union. If dictatorial and authoritarian drive from the Central Congress rulers is not stopped, and stopped in time, it becomes doubly difficult for the States to restrain themselves from carrying on the bitter struggles for States' autonomy and the Indian national integration.

The power transferred 'peacefully' to bourgeois-landlord classes and their political representative organisations of the Congress and the League, in Indian Union and Pakistan, has proved powerless to unite either of the countries and their polity.

The job is left for the proletariat and its genuine Communist party to lead the battle for the unity, democracy, independence and socialism for both the Indian Union and the rest of the subcontinent. There is no other class and no other path to save the Indian subcontinent from the intrigues of desperate imperialist camp, headed by the USA.

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